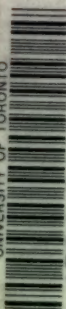


JOHN REDMOND

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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WARRE B. WELLS















**JOHN REDMOND**



*By the same Author.*

**A HISTORY OF THE IRISH  
REBELLION OF 1916**

(In Collaboration with N. MARLOWE)

**AN IRISH APOLOGIA :  
SOME THOUGHTS ON  
ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS  
AND THE WAR**

**THE IRISH CONVENTION  
AND SINN FEIN**

(In Collaboration with N. MARLOWE)





*R. Ardmore* 1914

*From a photograph by J. Russell & Sons*



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# JOHN REDMOND

A BIOGRAPHY

BY

WARRE B. WELLS



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## PREFATORY NOTE

THE sources upon which I have drawn in writing this book are, for the most part, acknowledged in the body of it. I have found the character-study, *John Redmond*, by his nephew, Mr. L. G. Redmond-Howard, a handy source of summaries and quotations. I wish to express my great indebtedness to Mr. J. M. Hone ('N. Marlowe'), my collaborator in earlier books, for his assistance in the preparation of this book.

WARRE B. WELLS.





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## INTRODUCTION

### THE BACKGROUND OF HISTORY

THE publishers of this book have suggested that it should be prefaced with a brief synopsis of Irish history since 1798, to provide, as it were, a background against which the life of John Redmond may be set. To write such a synopsis is a task less easy than it might appear. The very date selected as its starting-point is challenging. It invites a begging of the whole 'Irish question.' Did the Rebellion of 1798, as Unionists assert, justify the Act of Legislative Union between Ireland and Great Britain? Or was that Rebellion, as Nationalists reply, deliberately provoked with the object of providing a specious pretence of justification for the Union? It is, in fact, impossible that any survey of Irish history, however brief, should be taken up arbitrarily from the date of 1798 without reference to what went before it.

For the purposes with which we are concerned here the political history of modern Ireland may best be treated from the point of view of the interaction between what may be called, in the most general terms, constitutional and revolutionary movements for Irish reform; and it is from that point of view that I propose to treat it in this Introduction. It is an interaction which may be traced through the whole course of modern Irish political history. It

emerged sharply in the last years of John Redmond's life, with disastrous influence upon his own political fortunes.

The name of John Redmond stands in the past generation for the constitutional movement for Irish self-government known as Home Rule. The familiar phrase implies both something more and something less than mere repeal of the Act of Union. It implies something less because the Irish Parliament, as it existed immediately before the Act of Union, was technically—but only technically—co-equal in sovereign power with the British Parliament. In 1494 'Poyning's Law,' enacted by Henry VII.'s Parliament at Drogheda, made the Irish Parliament—then only the Parliament of the English Pale—a mere shadow, entirely dependent on the English King and Council. It did not give the English Parliament, however, the power of legislating for Ireland. That power was finally asserted when, in 1719, quarrels between the Parliaments culminated in the Act known as 'the Sixth of George I.,' which completely took away the independence of the Irish Parliament. But in 1782 this Act was repealed, and in the following year the Act of Renunciation declared that Ireland's right to be bound only by the laws made by the King and the Irish Parliament was 'established for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable.' 'Grattan's Parliament,' therefore, during its brief existence from 1782 down to the Act of Union, enjoyed a technical position of sovereign independence—a position to which the Home Rule movement of our time made no claim.

But, on the other hand, Home Rule implies some-



thing more than mere repeal of the Act of Union ; for the Irish Parliament never represented the nation, did not even represent the Protestant people, and was thoroughly corrupt. Since the Treaty of Limerick, which closed the War of the Revolution, the Government of Ireland had been completely in the hands of the small Protestant minority, who also possessed almost the whole of the land of the country and held all the offices of trust and emolument ; and this ' Protestant ascendancy,' as it was called, was confirmed by the Penal Laws directed against the Irish Catholics. The proceedings of the Irish Parliament and the political history of the country during the eighteenth century have reference wholly to the Protestant colony. The struggles of the Irish Legislature for independence, culminating in Grattan's Parliament of 1782, were the struggles of the Protestants ; the Catholics had no political existence, and could have no part in any of these contests. The Home Rule movement, of course, postulates a Parliament elected by equal, direct, and secret suffrage, together with an Executive responsible to it, which the Executive in the days of Grattan's Parliament was not.

The efforts of Grattan and Flood and their ' Patriot Party ' to secure legislative independence, it is germane to the thesis of this Introduction to observe, were crowned with success only when they were backed by the power of the Irish Volunteers, first formed about 1779, after the exploits of American privateers off the Irish coasts suggested the possibility of foreign invasion. (It was to this period that Mr. Redmond referred in his famous speech in the House of Commons on the outbreak of war.)

The 'Patriot Party' secured legislative independence with the power of the Volunteers behind them. They failed to secure redress of the three outstanding questions without which that success was barren—Parliamentary reform; the removal of the restrictions imposed on Irish commerce; and Catholic emancipation. They failed because the leaders of the Volunteers shrank from challenging a conflict with the Government. Constitutional action proved impotent to secure redress of grievances; and the Volunteers, deserted by their leaders, formed democratic associations and drifted towards revolutionary action. There is a constant recurrence of such developments in Irish political history.

The Rebellion of 1798 arose out of the exasperation and desperation induced by the failure of constitutional action to relieve the numerous causes of distress and discontent—the Penal Laws against the Catholics; the commercial restrictions, imposed and maintained in England's interests, which strangled Irish industry and commerce; the extortionate system of 'rack-rents,' under which farmers held their land from absentee landlords. Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and its other leaders drew their inspiration largely from the French Revolution. The outbreak of the Rebellion was precipitated by the excesses of the soldiers billeted on the people throughout the country. It was marked on the insurgent side by many atrocious incidents, and it was suppressed by the Government with the utmost ferocity.

The suppression of the Rebellion was followed by the passing of the Act of Union, justified by Pitt on the plea of 'military necessity.' Its passage through

the Irish Parliament was secured by wholesale bribery and corruption. The proprietors of 'rotten boroughs'—over 200 out of 300 in all—were bought with a sum aggregating one and a quarter million pounds, which was added, with a supreme touch of cynicism, to the Irish national debt; to purchase the votes of individual members and the favour of certain influential outsiders, numbers of peerages were created; and there were besides great numbers of bribes in the shape of preferments, pensions, and direct cash. So perished the corrupt Irish Parliament in an orgy of corruption in the Act of Union, which came into force on January 1, 1801. The articles of Union placed all subjects of the United Kingdom under the same regulations as to trade and commerce; but the promise of Catholic emancipation was not fulfilled.

Apart from the futile insurrection of Emmet in 1803, no real movement for repeal, constitutional or revolutionary, made its appearance for a full generation after the Act of Union. At this period the country was in a deplorable state. The conclusion of the Napoleonic wars was followed by stagnation in trade and great distress; the people lost all hope of relief; there were secret societies; and outrages were frequent. In 1805 Grattan became a member of the United Kingdom Parliament, and devoted himself almost exclusively to the cause of Irish Catholic Emancipation. At his death in 1820, however, emancipation was still withheld.

It was ultimately achieved chiefly through the agency of the Catholic Association, founded in 1823 by Daniel O'Connell, 'the Liberator' (who had already come into prominence in Ireland as an



advocate of emancipation) and by Richard Lalor Shiel. Its expenses were defrayed chiefly by a subscription from the people of a penny a week, known as 'Catholic rent,' and it was the means of establishing a free Press and creating a healthy public opinion. The Association was frequently suppressed by the Government, and as often reconstructed with great astuteness by O'Connell. Finally the Clare election, successfully contested by O'Connell with the object of bringing home to the British people the absurdity of disfranchising a constituency because the chosen member refused to take an oath that his own religion was false, aroused sympathy all through England for the Irish Catholics. The Government, thoroughly alarmed by the preparations of the Catholic Association to return Catholic members throughout Ireland, passed Catholic Emancipation in 1829, after Wellington had declared in the House of Lords that the alternatives were emancipation or civil war.

O'Connell may be said to have founded in Ireland the system of peaceful, persevering, popular agitation against political grievances, keeping within the letter of the law, but not within its spirit. 'Monster meetings' were an outstanding feature of an agitation constitutional in aim, but rather revolutionary in method. After the passage of emancipation, O'Connell continued his agitation on the same lines for Repeal. His revival of it in 1830 coincided with the outbreak of the 'tithe war,' in which a general movement of the Catholic peasantry arose against the payment of tithes for the upkeep of the established Protestant Church, and many fatal encounters took place between peasants and police. The Repeal



agitation, which had existed ineffectively since 1810, came to a head in 1840, when O'Connell founded the Repeal Association and organised a great series of 'monster meetings'—at one of which, held at Tara, a quarter of a million people were estimated to be present—during the following years. Finally, in October 1843, the Government 'proclaimed' a 'monster meeting' at Clontarf, near Dublin. O'Connell did not take up the Government's challenge, and dispersed the meeting; he was, nevertheless, arrested, tried, and convicted, but soon released on a point of law.

O'Connell's action in connection with the Clontarf 'monster meeting' virtually ended the Repeal agitation. A number of his younger followers, losing faith in his method, separated from him and formed the 'Young Ireland Party,' which, by contrast with O'Connell's 'Old Ireland Party,' an almost exclusively Catholic organisation, aimed at embracing the whole people of Ireland. One of its most brilliant, and most violent, members was John Mitchel, an Ulster Protestant. O'Connell died at Genoa on his way to Rome in 1846, when his policy had been largely superseded by that of the Young Irelanders. This policy tended more and more towards revolutionary doctrines. It was given an immense stimulus by the great potato famine of 1846 and 1847, during which the people died by hundreds of thousands of starvation and hunger-famine, while day after day corn enough to feed the whole country was exported in shiploads, with the peasantry dying of hunger. In 1848 the Young Irelanders determined to attempt revolution. The Government, however, was prepared. Mitchel,

Smith O'Brien, Meagher, and the other leaders were arrested and sentenced to transportation ; and the Young Ireland movement collapsed in what has been aptly called a 'swift, tiny, and impossible appeal to the sword.'

The movement—essentially a 'literary' movement—had for a time infused new life and energy into Irish Nationalism ; but the suppression of the movement following upon the exhaustion of the famine left it for some years at a very low ebb. About 1862, James Stephens founded the Society of the Fenian Brotherhood, a secret oath-bound society, with the object of bringing about the independence of Ireland by force of arms. This new movement issued in 1867 in another rising, which was easily suppressed, and in dynamite outrages in England and Ireland. Fenianism, however, survived the suppression of the rising as an active agent in Irish political life.

The failure of the Fenian movement was not absolute. It was largely responsible for Gladstone's attempt at reforms in Ireland, especially, in 1869, the disestablishment of the Irish Protestant Church, which was shown in Parliament to have been unable to carry out the intention for which it was originally established—the conversion of the Irish Catholics. The disestablishment of the Protestant Church in turn contributed indirectly to the establishment of the Home Rule movement, with which many prominent Protestants associated themselves in protest against the action of the Imperial Parliament in connection with their Church.

The term 'Home Rule' was coined by Isaac Butt, perhaps the most gifted intellectually of the Irish

leaders of the nineteenth century—a great advocate, a philosopher, a highly educated man of much personal charm, loose in morals, always in debt. He had been a Unionist and an opponent of O'Connell's Repeal movement; while still a Unionist he defended the Fenian prisoners. His Home Rule movement, established in 1873, is important as marking the end of the idea of simple Repeal. Before his time there had been some discussion of Federalism as an alternative to Repeal. Home Rule as he conceived it seems to have been a sort of compromise between the two. From his point of view it did not necessarily impair the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. At the same time it did not deliberately propose a federal system (though Butt himself personally favoured a United Kingdom federalism). The contrast between O'Connell and Butt is notable. Both professed a decided loyalty to the Empire, together with devotion to the rights of property. The former, however, was an agitator constitutional in aim but scarcely in action; the latter was constitutional both in aim and action. Butt, in whose movement John Redmond's father played a part, proposed to convert English parties to Home Rule by reason.

Butt's Home Rule movement—chiefly composed of gentry and professional men—is important as marking a stage in the evolution of Irish political ideas. It achieved, however, little practical result in itself. The driving-force of economic discontent needed to be added to the aspiration for self-government before great progress was to be made. This combination was achieved when, in 1879, Charles Stewart Parnell, a young Irish squire, was elected



leader of the Irish Party, immediately after the formation by Michael Davitt of the Land League, which was subsequently to exercise great influence in the country and in Parliament. Davitt was a thorough-going democrat, who believed in the nationalisation of the land and in other theories of the Socialist State. The winter of the same year brought a great failure of crops in Ireland, leading to a terrible distress among the tenant-farmers.

Thus everything conspired to encourage the success of what was called 'The New Departure,' namely, an alliance of the most embittered extremists with the left or Parnellite wing of the parliamentary Home Rulers. Idealists among the Fenians like John O'Leary, who still believed in open insurrection, refused their support to the Land League, which, on the other hand, appealed to large masses of the more practical kind of revolutionists, especially in America. Devoy, the Irish-American leader, declared, however, that the real object of the 'New Departure' was the recovery of national independence. This, too, was Parnell's view, although he preferred to borrow Butt's more ambiguous phrase of Home Rule.

But, whatever might be the mixed purposes of the combination, it was clear in 1880 that the Irish people had once again definitely abandoned arms for policy. The character of the period with which the subject of this book was identified could not be better summed up than it was in a recent manifesto of the Irish Party (October 11, 1918). It is the period of 'the policy which was laid before Ireland in 1878, under the name of the "New Departure," put into practice under Parnell and Davitt, and



which, under their leadership, secured the support of all that was best in the ranks of the physical force men of '67, and forged for Ireland the most formidable and effective weapon placed in her hand throughout the whole of her history, set free the land of Ireland, destroyed the long impregnable fortress of landlordism, extracted right after right from successive British Governments, and finally, under the leadership of John Redmond, removed the British opposition to Irish freedom, and brought Ireland to the very threshold of final victory.'

## CHAPTER I

### THE LEADER AND THE MAN

THE life-story of John Redmond is the record of one of the most remarkable paradoxes in the political history of the United Kingdom in modern times. No field of study, perhaps, offers more pitfalls than Irish politics in the making of broad generalisations. But, expressed briefly and in the most general terms, and without any of those necessary reserves and qualifications which will be given their due weight in the proper place in the course of this narrative, the paradox of John Redmond's career may be stated thus. It was his mission in political life to recommend to the British democracy by constitutional means the Irish demand for national self-government. He brought that mission to the immediate eve of success. He brought it to the immediate eve of success so far as the British democracy was concerned ; and simultaneously he found the whole basis of the constitutional claim largely repudiated by the Irish people. He died, a convinced constitutionalist, at a moment when the constitutional movement, and with it his hope of a peaceful settlement of the Anglo-Irish quarrel, seemed to be submerged in a relapse into revolutionary methods.

To write of the life of John Redmond is necessarily, in effect, to write of the history of Irish politics

during the past generation ; and politics, the sum of the conflict of human passions, noble and ignoble, the movement of tendencies in mass psychology, present themselves to the historical student with a certain aspect of impersonality. But in the record of the paradox of John Redmond's career, it is apparent, we are dealing essentially with the material of a personal tragedy—a personal tragedy of its kind scarcely less poignant than that of his predecessor in the Irish national leadership, Charles Stewart Parnell. One may very properly, therefore, preface the record of his public life with some study of what manner of man it was to whom this tragedy befell.

A very brief and superficial review, at the outset, of his political career, with one or two outstanding incidents in it, and of the political material with which he had to deal, will give us some insight into the personal character of the man. John Redmond was not an initiator of political action. He introduced no new methods, either of agitation at home or of strategy at Westminster, but endeavoured rather to perfect the system which he had inherited from Parnell. It was ever his proudest boast that he stood for the policy of Parnell. Parnell's methods were : (a) passive resistance in Ireland against certain laws, particularly those relating to the land, which national sentiment regarded as inimical ; (b) obstruction in the British Parliament. The British Government broke the weapon of obstruction by altering the Parliamentary rules of procedure, whereupon Parnell made it his chief aim to secure the balance of power at Westminster, urging that one of the two great English parties would, for the sake of

power, purchase the Irish vote by the offer of Home Rule.

Mr. Redmond, as we know, did acquire the balance of power in 1910, with the result that the Liberal Party, which after its return to office by a huge independent majority in 1905 had ignored Home Rule, immediately attacked the veto of the House of Lords and proposed a measure of Irish self-government. *Sinn Féiners* have asserted that Redmond 'betrayed' the policy of Parnell. They urge that Parnell, had he lived, would soon have abandoned Westminster, and quote a speech which he delivered at Limerick in November 1880. Parnell then said that he did not believe in the permanence of an Irish Party at Westminster, for 'sooner or later the influence which every English Government had at its command would sap the best of Irish parties.' John Redmond did, however, succeed in maintaining the independence of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party, and, in effect, he disproved Parnell's doubts of Irish stability. In 1910—thirty years after Parnell's speech at Limerick—an independent Irish Party held the British party system at its mercy, and was able to force the Government not only to put Home Rule in the forefront of its programme, but to demand from the King himself guarantees against obstructive action on the part of the House of Lords.

Yet when he died, seven years later, Home Rule, though an Act, seemed further than ever from being a fact. Where, then, had been Mr. Redmond's error of judgment? The Irish Party under his leadership could show a record of definite Parliamentary achievement unequalled by any other



minority party in the House of Commons. But Parliamentary achievement was not enough, and what John Redmond, like other politicians, failed to realise was that the machine itself had broken down. Political democracy in the years 1912-1914 was an impolite fiction. Mr. Redmond might dominate Parliament; but what was the use of that when people were losing their habit of obedience and respect towards Parliament? Such an event as a 'loyalist' insurrection against law like the Ulster Unionist movement would have been inconceivable in the United Kingdom of Parnell's days. There was more than a little truth in the *Sinn Féiners'* contention of the futility of Parliamentarism. But the fault did not lie, as they alleged, in any particular corruption of the Irish representatives. John Redmond's own position was one of the greatest honour, and he kept aloof more than any contemporary politician from the intrigues of the place-hunters.

Mr. Redmond almost to the end maintained Parnell's idea of the need of keeping Irishmen together even at some cost of apparent inconsistency. To different audiences he could talk differently. When in America, for instance, he would not estrange the support of the extremists from himself by laying stress on his own belief that the Irish national claim might be satisfied within the Empire. What he aimed at was Home Rule, and, if Republicans chose to assist a Home Rule movement, should he reject their aid? He agreed with Parnell that no man may set bounds to the march of a nation. In England he declared that separation was impossible and undesirable.

Was there here any real inconsistency? That no man may set bounds to the march of a nation is, in reality, a truism. Mr. Redmond's personal opinion was that Irishmen, once they possessed a wide measure of self-government, would be happy in their place within the Empire. Other Irishmen—supporters of the Parliamentary movement too—looked on Home Rule as a stepping-stone towards separation. It would have been foolish of Mr. Redmond to have rejected the friendship of such Irishmen simply because he differed from them as to what might happen to an Ireland of the future. Of this, however, we may be certain—namely, that Mr. Redmond, once self-government had been established by constitutional means and agreement with England, would have stood apart from, or indeed firmly resisted, all attempts to move in the separatist direction. His attitude on the war is a final proof of this.

In August 1914, John Redmond broke with the separatists once and for all. Principle and expediency met in a fatal clash, and he knew it would be no longer possible for him to work with men who believed that the reduction of the British Empire was an Irish interest. The issue was forced, as it were, prematurely and in circumstances that were unfavourable to Mr. Redmond. Could he have come to Ireland in August 1914, to be Prime Minister of a new Irish Parliament—his own achievement—and to conduct recruiting on Irish lines, the magnitude of his supremacy as against the separatists would not have been in doubt. We know how far otherwise were the circumstances in which he declared the true faith which was in him. His

speech in the House of Commons at the outbreak of the war, when he offered Irish support to the Government, was delivered entirely on his own initiative. He acted then under stress of personal emotion, and even—so we have been told—without consulting his principal colleague. Whoever reads the story of John Redmond's political career will observe that there were several occasions on which, for the sake of maintaining Irish unity, he compromised with his inner natural inclinations and adopted opinions which were not entirely his own. But his action in regard to the European struggle never varied, and, the stronger his opponents of the *Sinn Féin* party became, the stiffer grew his own attitude of loyalty to the British cause.

At the same time he forcibly resented what seemed to him to be an inexcusable stupidity of the British war-policy in Ireland. 'John Redmond,' says an English friend, 'broke his heart because he tried to stand between the two forces. His passion for the war against Germany was absolutely sincere. It was partly the passion of a Catholic who saw a Catholic country being ravaged and Catholics being slaughtered by a great Protestant Power. It was partly the sympathy of a chivalric man for a little nation. In any case no one who knew him could doubt that it was fiercely honest and passionate—so passionate that for the moment he was carried off his feet and carried out of that calm, calculating mood which had hitherto made him infinitely cautious in all his dealings with Englishmen. For once he let himself go. He trusted England. He showed, what all his friends knew, that at heart he was a simple-minded man.'



But, this intimate observer adds, 'complete as his confidence was in British sympathy at that high moment, absolute as was his trust, just so deep and so wrathful was his passion of resentment when England failed to respond. In October 1916, some time after the Irish Rebellion, I spent a long morning with him at his flat, and heard from his mouth, in the form of a criticism of the War Office in its dealings with Ireland since 1914, one of the most scathing indictments of our rule in Ireland that, I suppose, he ever uttered. He repeated this indictment in the House of Commons some little time afterwards, but in a far more moderate form. In private life he gave full rein to his vehement and passionate anger. As I listened to his full and detailed narrative of the follies of the War Office in dealing with that great Irish offer to help us in the German War, I wondered whether in the history of Great Britain so great an opportunity had ever been so foolishly thrown away. It was all very well for British Ministers in the House of Commons afterwards to condemn the blunders that had been perpetrated. But the pity of it was that it was Mr. John Redmond who had to bear the whole penalty. For he, at that moment, stood between England and Ireland as the one statesman who took on his shoulders all the crimes and follies of both.'<sup>1</sup>

John Redmond's personal life was a quiet and uneventful one. It was, in spite of the deeply felt loss

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Harold Spender, *Contemporary Review*, April 1918. In regard to other aspects of Mr. Redmond's leadership, Mr. Spender points out very truly that he was selected as a leader of the constitutional type, subject to the advice of the Irish Party and the national organisation. 'Every act of policy was discussed by the Irish party. Every speaker was chosen by the party. That party could by its decision even impose



of his first wife, a happy one on the whole. He had all the Irish domestic virtues, and his second marriage, like his first, was of the most devoted kind. His best friends were drawn from among his relatives. He delighted in the ardent character and irrepressible humour of his famous brother 'Willie,' who predeceased him by a few months only. He and his brother William had married, when they were still almost boys, two Australian sisters. His son, who is now a captain in the army and also member of Parliament for Waterford City, was a great source of pride. He greatly resembles his father in appearance and inherits the political interest of the family. John Redmond had three children by his first marriage, none by his second. One daughter recently died in America. The second, Johanna, who is married to Mr. Max Green, of the Irish Prisons Board, is greatly talented as an author.

In early manhood John Redmond was accounted handsome. To the end of his life he remained what the Irish call 'a fine figure of a man.' The red-haired Celt and the blonde Scandinavian had evidently contributed largely to his making. One could not mistake him for anything but an Irishman, and yet his was not a type of face that is particularly characteristic either of the East or West of Ireland. There was certainly nothing in him of the Iberian of the Western Coast, whose race is 'Mediterranean.' He had, however, the prominent light blue eyes

a collective vow of silence on the whole body. It was the best disciplined party in the House of Commons, and the leader was disciplined also. This is a good answer to the common criticism of Redmond that he did not display "Parnell's strength." He had not been intended to do so.' Mr. Hugh Law, M.P., in the *Dublin Review* (July 1918) also lays stress on the constitutional character of his leadership.

and the somewhat florid complexion that are found commonly enough in the English Pale. His mouth was firm and his brow expressed nobility. Like his brother, he conveyed an impression of the picturesque rather than of regular beauty. Yet he dressed according to the conventions of society, and always with great care. His neatness was un-Irish, and distinguished him from the majority of his colleagues, who rather tended to seek after a conspiratorial effect. He was, indeed, one of the most fastidious of men ; and his instinctive repugnance to physical contact with persons not well groomed stood in curious contrast with his dependence on a democratic constituency comprising all sorts and conditions.

His friends were mostly chosen from his early political associates, and, at the end of his life, he was a somewhat solitary figure. Many of his old comrades at arms—the men who had fought with him through the Parnell split—had passed away, and his own continued absorption in politics had not been favourable to the cultivation of non-professional friendships. Indeed, he denied himself much for the sake of the cause. For, although not a tremendously hard worker—his attitude towards details was always a rather indolent one—he was extremely regular in his habits and never acted Parnell's rôle of the *roi fainéant*. Except for short spells in the autumn recesses he was never out of touch with political affairs ; he was the most punctual of men, and, when in London during the Parliamentary sessions, there was hardly a night on which he dined outside of the House of Commons.

Yet, as one of his younger colleagues, Mr. Hugh Law, has written, John Redmond 'was no ascetic.' 'He was a man to whom the achievement of the customary ambitions of men offered attractions. He liked good wine and the many things that money can buy.' The leadership of Irish Nationalism is not such a customary ambition. It offers no security of power, and leads to poverty rather than to wealth. When we realise what were the man's proper tastes and inclinations, we shall understand that the sacrifices he made for his country were real and not theatrical sacrifices.

During the Parnell split his constant companions in social life were Mr. Patrick O'Brien, member for Kilkenny city, and Mr. Edmond Leamy, that most charming of Nationalists. Death deprived Mr. Redmond of both those friends. At a later date he showed great appreciation of Mr. Stephen Gwynn, a scholar and man of letters who, although a son of one of the most distinguished Unionist houses in Ireland, had thrown in his lot with the Home Rule movement. Notable among his English friends were two Liberal journalists, Mr. W. M. Crook and Mr. Harold Spender. He had a particular partiality, however, for Colonials and for Americans; he was proud of the Australian associations that he had through his wife; and there was nothing that he liked better than to entertain visitors from the Dominions at his house at Aughavanagh, Co. Wicklow, during the recess. He had also many friends among the Irish priesthood, and among those on whose counsel he set the highest value was Dr. Kelly, the Bishop of Ross, who stood by him (in a minority among ecclesiastics) during the last trying period



of his political career. Though he never sought the society of political opponents, he could get on well with Irish Unionists and Protestants when he came across them in social life, and those Unionists and Protestants who had the pleasure of his acquaintance spoke always in the highest terms of his geniality and good manners.

His popularity in his own party remained great to the end. 'He was the ideal chairman,' says Mr. Law, 'courteous, understanding, and faithful to the humblest of his followers.' Differences of opinion might arise within the party, but they never disturbed his sense of justice. Such differences of opinion arose very acutely during the last year or two of his life, particularly during the sittings of the Convention. When a decisive division was being taken at Regent House, Mr. Redmond found himself opposed by one of his principal colleagues; the Nationalist representation had split up into a majority and a minority section. It was Redmond's opinion that the action of the minority disposed of all hope of a fruitful issue to the Convention. He returned 'heart-broken' to London. Mr. Law saw him there, and, being aware of what had passed, spoke reproachfully of the minority leader. Redmond said at once, 'He did what he thought was best for Ireland.' Tiredness and disappointment had not embittered his soul.

On the other hand he was—at least towards the end of his life—a little impatient of the external forces which directed themselves against his policy. He had no personal points of contact with the Young Ireland of *Sinn Féin*. It is probably true that there were no possible means of accommodation between



himself and those Irishmen who rejected Parliamentarism as the Devil and asserted Irish neutrality in the war. The mischief was already done. To an American interviewer in 1915 he described the *Sinn Féiners* as 'an insignificant handful of pro-Germans.' The attitude may have been a spirited one, but the facts were not as stated. Even before the war—when an accommodation might yet have been possible—Mr. Redmond seems to have shut his eyes to the critical, insurgent tendencies of the younger political generation.

During the latter part of his life he resided chiefly in London, in a small Kensington flat. His house in Dublin was closed. Every year, however, autumn saw him at Aughavanagh in County Wicklow. Aughavanagh, which used to be the property of the Parnells, had been built for a barracks at the time of the Rebellion of 1798. It had long been disused, like other buildings built in Ireland at the same date and for the same purpose, until Mr. Redmond put it into repair and used it as a shooting-lodge. The many-roomed, gaunt house is set many miles from any railway, amid a wild scenery, on the so-called Military Road which traverses the highlands of Wicklow, and finally leads into the county of Dublin.

John Redmond loved Wicklow dearly, not less for the quality of its scenery and the opportunities it offered for an open-air life than for its political associations. Grouse shooting and fishing were his favourite sports, but he was also happy on a horse. His love of the country did not, however, manifest itself in the violent English fashion. He had a talent for idleness, and did not need to seek

for what Havelock Ellis has called that 'muscular auto-intoxication for the sake of which the Anglo-Saxon misses the finest moments that life can give.' Nothing pleased him better on his holidays than to lie in the Wicklow heather, his face to the sun, near the murmur of running water, and to summon back again those day-dreams which, as his kindly schoolmasters thought, had been the too close companions of his soul.

It has often been said that Mr. Redmond was by nature a conservative. The old-fashioned term 'Whig' would convey a better idea of the character of his general political ideas. He inherited much of his outlook from Burke and Grattan and the great Anglo-Irish statesmen of the eighteenth century. In regard to education, however, he was, owing to his Catholicism, quite a conservative, and, when Mr. Balfour was Premier, he brought his party to Westminster, against the opinion of Radicals like T. P. O'Connor and Davitt, to support Balfourian legislation for the English Church Schools. Yet one cannot give the name Tory to a man whose life was devoted to a movement which had for its main end the destruction of that aristocratic centralised Government which Dublin Castle represents. Nationalism in Ireland inevitably bases itself upon some theory of political democracy and a belief in majority rule; Irish Unionism justifies itself upon the aristocratic principle that a propertied minority, long established in power, experienced in the art of government, may not be overborne by the mere weight of numbers.

That Mr. Redmond worked and voted with the British Liberal Party was not 'solely a matter of

high policy,' as Mr. Harold Spender thinks.<sup>1</sup> He believed, as British Liberals believe, in political democracy. On the other hand, he had, like Burke and Grattan, a just recognition of superiorities, and his ideal democracy could certainly have chosen for its leaders men of birth, experience, and position. He certainly hoped that the Irish Unionist 'gentleman' could play an important rôle in a self-governing Ireland. Nor had he any feeling for economic democracy. 'His ideas of land reform stopped,' as Mr. Spender truly says, 'at the point of desiring peasant proprietorship. There his feeling for his race (and, one may add, his religion) was reinforced by a strong belief that peasant proprietorship would give weight to the new Irish social fabric whenever Home Rule was once established. For his idea of the future Home Rule society was by no means that of a restless, eager, progressive community. He rather looked to it as a stable make-weight to the revolutionary tendencies of Western Europe.'

Certainly in matters outside of politics he was no apostle of change. His general view of life was that of the Irish Catholic country gentleman. He was a traditionalist in religion. His faith was simple and sincere; and, as his nephew, Mr. Redmond Howard, has observed, his peremptory and practical mind scarcely appreciated those subtleties of thought, those shades of meaning, those clashings of dogma, those contradictions between religion and dogma which make Catholicism a philosophy. It was well said by Mr. Howard that there was more of the Roman than the Greek about him. According to the same

<sup>1</sup> 'John Redmond: an Impression,' by Harold Spender, *Contemporary Review*, April 1918.



writer he was 'typically Irish in condemnation of all breaches of Church discipline.' His literary tastes were classical. He was well acquainted with the great English writers of the past, and could recite with gusto the purple passages of Shakespeare and of Cicero. But in later years he read very little, partly because he lacked the leisure and partly because modern literature did not attract him.

Though he might sometimes attend at the Irish National Theatre as a patriotic duty, he found little or no significance in what is called the Celtic Renaissance. Tom Moore seemed to him to be the Irish National poet. He was, however, well disposed towards the movement for safeguarding the Gaelic speech, and he spoke strongly enough on many occasions against the Anglicisation of Ireland. He had a sense of the great Gaelic past, of the civilisation which had covered Western Europe with seats of learning and religious institutions. But, unlike some modern Irishmen in whom this sense is highly developed, he had also a capacity for admiring the progressive communities of the present day, even though they might be termed 'Anglo-Saxon'; nor could he forget the part that Irish blood and brains had played in their development.



## CHAPTER II

### ANCESTRY AND YOUTH

THE name of Redmond, like the names of so many Irish leaders, cannot claim a Gaelic origin. It is an Anglicised form of the French Raymond, a name which calls to mind the Middle Ages and the celebrated Counts of Talouse, combaters of the Albigenian heresy. The ancestors attributed to the Redmonds in Ireland bore that name of Raymond, and the designation *Le Gros*. Raymond Le Gros landed in Wexford in 1172, a few months prior to Strongbow. Coming as an English adventurer with designs upon Irish land, he subsequently married the sister of Strongbow; he then became the Earl of Pembroke and a vast proprietor of Gaelic property. The ruins of the abbey in which this, the first English marriage in Ireland, took place, are still shown in County Wexford. Though Raymond acquired a considerable quantity of land by his marriage, little is known of his subsequent history, and whether he ever founded a family is uncertain.

O'Hara in his book on *Irish Families* states that the Redmonds of Ballaghkeene in Wexford had a common ancestor with the noble Geraldines (Dukes of Leinster); this family died out in 1689. Another well-known family of the Redmonds, also extinct, were from Fethard. We find in early editions of

Burke's *Landed Gentry* an account of a third family of Redmonds from the same County of Wexford—the Redmonds of the Deeps. Their founder was Edward Redmond, a merchant who flourished in Wexford at the latter end of the eighteenth century. Edward Redmond married Anne Corish of Wexford—Corish is the name of a family which has in recent times been influential in Irish Nationalist politics—and had two sons, one of whom, John, became a wealthy banker in the south of Ireland. This John Redmond had in turn two sons, Patrick Walter and John Edward. The latter, who also resided at the Deeps, Co. Wexford, was the first Redmond to enter Parliament. His elder brother, Patrick Walter of Pembroke House, Co. Dublin, had three sons, John Patrick of Ballytrent, Co. Wexford, William Archer, and Walter. The second of these, William Archer, sometime M.P. for Wexford, was the father of the John and William Redmond of our days. William Archer Redmond died in 1880; his elder brother survived him for a few years, and on the latter's death, the Redmonds of Ballaghkeene and of Fethard being extinct, John Redmond, the late Irish leader, became the head of the family in Ireland.

Constantly the children of the settler in Ireland became 'more Irish than the Irish themselves,' and history would not have to record an exception if it could be proved that Raymond Le Gros had founded a family which finally produced as its head a leader of the Nationalist reconquest of Ireland. The Irish are fond of pedigrees and take an interest in race origins, but Irish patriotism has long been established on a basis broad enough to include not the Dane and Norman only, but also the Cromwellian and

Williamite. Emmet, Tone, Parnell are all English names, 'newer' English than Redmond; and if the Redmonds, like the Geraldines, 'began their lawless reign of conquerors in the van of Strongbow,' this has been forgiven them long ago. Indeed, there are few Irishmen to-day who would not be proud to trace a connection with an ancient Anglo-Norman house like Raymond's. But there is, as has been said, no certainty that any of the blood of Raymond Le Gros ran in the veins of John Redmond. For all we know, the latter's family may have been purely Irish in origin; for, as we must remember, Irish people in the early period of English rule had perforce often to disguise their nationality by borrowing surnames from their conquerors.

This can be said—and it is the chief thing—that Redmonds have for many centuries played an unstained part in the history of the County Wexford and South-Eastern Ireland. They have included landlords and peasants, rebels and officers of the British army, priests and merchants. We may be sure, moreover, that the Redmonds, whatever their origin, did not lack the Gaelic admixture. All the early English settlers in Ireland intermarried with the native population and its descendants. After the Reformation divisions became more acute and intermarriage less frequent; but some of the old English families retained the ancient faith and finally were merged in the Irish nation. Among these families were the Redmonds.

The Redmonds through the darkest days of the Penal Laws adhered steadfastly to the Roman Catholic Church. One Redmond fought gallantly against Cromwell, and subsequently suffered for-



feiture of much of his land. Another joined the 'Wild Geese,' and became an officer in the regiment of the Chevalier de Dillon in the wars of Louis XIV. A third was the friend of Napoleon. A fourth took part in the American Civil War. The Redmonds were evidently men of arms rather than of books, arts, or policy. But the most popularly famous member of the family was a priest, namely, Father John Redmond, who was executed after the insurrection of 1798. Father John had not participated in the rising, being, indeed, as were most of the Redmonds, anti-Republican. He was, however, the friend of a scoundrel of the name of Lord Mount Norris, who had a connection with the United Irishmen. Lord Mount Norris, in order to divert suspicion from himself, brought charges against the priest which led to the latter's execution.

The romantic political associations of his native country never ceased to affect John Redmond's imagination. 'My boyish ears had listened,' he once said, 'to the tales of '98 from the lips of old men who had themselves witnessed the struggles, and I scarcely know a family which cannot tell of a father, or grandfather or some near relative, who died fighting at Wexford, Oulart, or Ross.'

Mr. William Archer Redmond married Miss Hoey, of Co. Wicklow, an army officer's daughter, and his first son, John Edward Redmond, was born in 1857 in Dublin. The one other son of the marriage was the late William Redmond, M.P., who has 'died for Ireland' in the war. Of two sisters, one became a nun and the other married an Australian, Mr. Howard. John Redmond spent his earliest years at Ballytrent on the Wexford sea-coast, the



home of his uncle, Patrick Walter. The family was of simple habits, and lived the life of *squireens* (small squires) rather than that of Anglo-Irish aristocrats or landlords of the type familiarised by Lever. At that time in Ireland Protestants represented almost all that there was of aristocratic prestige, and Catholic families, however respectable their origins, did not easily win a proper social recognition. If they endeavoured to do so it might be at the cost of being accounted *shoneens* (snobs) and 'Castle Catholics' by popular opinion. The Redmonds were never *shoneens*. Nevertheless, with their army and other respectable connections, they held themselves in good esteem, and, as we shall see, it was something like a shock to the family when its heir threw in his lot with the 'rebels' of the Land League.

The decade in which John Redmond was born was a quiet decade in Irish politics—and a corrupt one. All traces of the idealism of the Young Ireland movement of the 'forties had seemingly disappeared; only seemingly, however, for in the 'sixties Fenianism revived the doctrine of political self-sacrifice and physical risk. The failure of the Fenians to achieve an end, coupled with their success in reviving the national spirit, offered those Irishmen who were at once moderate in opinion and personally honest, an opportunity of making themselves heard. The elder Redmond was such an Irishman. After his election for Wexford in 1872 he attended the first Home Rule Conference of 1873, and identified himself with the movement led by that gifted and eloquent Irishman, Isaac Butt.

The Home Rulers of those days were, it must be understood, in no sense revolutionary, but pro-

fessed a decided loyalty to the Empire and a devotion to the rights of property. These early Home Rulers numbered many brilliant personalities; Butt himself and George Henry Moore<sup>1</sup> were men of genius. The talents of the elder Redmond, his good sense and judgment, were appreciated, but did not lend themselves to display. He was opposed to the ruder movement initiated by Parnell and to the Bolshevik methods of Biggar and the Land League. The character of the Home Rule movement changed utterly in the later 'seventies, and when John Redmond entered Parliament as a Nationalist member he did a thing which the middle classes no longer held respectable. His younger brother William, then an officer in the Militia, telegraphed desperately on hearing the news of John's decision, 'For God's sake, don't disgrace the family.'

It appears that John Redmond's interest in public affairs had been early awakened. He was educated at Clongowes, the celebrated Jesuit College in Kildare, which is the principal school in Ireland for Irish Catholics of the middle classes. The atmosphere of Clongowes is not pugnaciously Nationalist, although many Nationalists have been among its pupils.<sup>2</sup> At that time, no doubt, John Redmond shared the moderate opinions of his father. His contemporaries were impressed by his maturity. 'He took an interest in politics,' says Mr. Gannon of Maynooth, 'and lived half out

<sup>1</sup> Father of George Moore the novelist and Colonel Moore of the National Volunteers. Colonel Moore and John Redmond worked together at the beginning of the recent war in the endeavour to raise an Irish brigade for service in France and Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> William Redmond and, in a later generation, T. M. Kettle were Clongownians.

of school in a world of thought and action more befitting a man. . . . His character was fixed early. I well remember his delight when Marshal MacMahon became President of the French Republic, and his saying to the lay-brother who used to look after us in the refectory: "Hurrah, Brother! they have an Irish President in France." "

It does not seem, however, that John Redmond fell under the suspicion of being a prig, and he played games with fair success. Father Kane of Clongowes describes a meeting with John Redmond and his father in 1870. 'The father was a tall, majestic man with a most aristocratic face, a perfect portrait of which, although with youthful line and curve, was stamped upon the features of the son.' John Redmond was recognised as the cleverest boy in the school, although he was not always at the top of his class. What he rather lacked was the quality of steady industry, and he was inclined to indulge in day-dreams. He wrote very good essays and attempted poetry, for which there was a class in Clongowes. 'I have heard it stated since,' says Father Kane, 'that some few of the pupils then at Clongowes did not think that John Redmond had any real sense of poetry. With that criticism I most thoroughly disagree. Many of the English poems which he wrote for me were quite up to the standard of high-class magazines.'

John Redmond also showed a great aptitude for the actor's art, and there is a portrait of him extant in the rôle of Hamlet. He took a leading part in the Debating Society of the School. Elocution was another subject taught at Clongowes, and here, as may be imagined, the young Redmond had no rival.



Mr. Bell, the compiler of *Bell's Annual*, was a master at Clongowes, and the pupil was rebellious. 'On Academy Day,' says Father Kane, 'John Redmond was to declaim an English poem. He appealed to me as to whether he was bound to carry out Mr. Bell's directions. I told him to obey Mr. Bell during the practices, but to follow out his own ideas on the occasion itself. The result was a great success, for it was not another Bell who spoke, but a greater elocutionist, John Redmond.'

Mr. Redmond always dwelt affectionately upon his schooldays. As a politician he was, at times and in a mild way, anti-clerical, but he had never any criticism to pass upon the Jesuits' method of education. 'I know I was taught here,' he said at the Clongowes Centenary Celebrations in 1914, 'to accept success without arrogance and defeat without repining. I know I was taught here, by precept and example, the lessons of truth, chivalry, and manliness.' At the National Banquet at the Hôtel Cecil on St. Patrick's Day, 1912, John Redmond again referred to his schooldays. 'To the Jesuits,' he exclaimed, 'and to Clongowes I owe all that I have of good, and all that I may have been able to do, or tried at least to do, for the happiness and greatness of Ireland.'

John Redmond was at Clongowes from 1870 to 1873; his brother William came to Clongowes in 1873, and left in 1876. From Clongowes John Redmond went to Trinity College, Dublin, that Elizabethan institution which has been characterised as a stronghold of the Protestant mind in Ireland. There was then in Ireland no National University with the 'suitable Catholic atmosphere' such as





JOHN REDMOND AS HAMLET IN A STUDENTS'  
PERFORMANCE AT CLONGOWES

*(By permission of the Rev. Father Ryan)*



now (largely owing to Mr. Redmond's efforts) exists, and Trinity College was frequented but little by Catholic youth. Nevertheless Nationalists are proud of Trinity, the *alma mater* of Burke and Grattan, which has produced by reaction many Protestant patriots. John Redmond never said a bitter word of Trinity, and it was there indeed that he learned to appreciate the qualities of Protestant Ireland. We may note that if, in his subsequent political career, he sometimes attacked the pretensions of English rule in Ireland in extreme language, he was always moderate and conservative in his attitude towards those of his fellow countrymen who had been brought up in a faith different from his own.

From Trinity College John Redmond proceeded, without taking a degree, to King's Inn, Dublin. He intended to follow the profession of a barrister. Mr. W. M. Crook, an Irish journalist in London, has furnished some impressions of him at this time. Redmond's main political preoccupation was then temperance reform, and he practised what he preached. 'It was the custom for students at King's Inn to dine in messes of six. A fixed quantity of wine *per head* was allowed to each table, and thirsty students, of which there were not a few, always sought diligently for totally abstaining acquaintances to join the mess. As I did not drink wine I found myself in great demand, and on one occasion the same mess captured John Redmond also. As he never took more than half a glass of wine at dinner, this lucky table found itself with six bottles of wine for four persons—and I had the privilege of being introduced to John Redmond.' The same writer describes John Redmond as a student and inter-

preter of Shakespeare greater than most of the professors of English literature.

John Redmond's heart was, most likely, never in the law ; yet, when he went to London in 1879 to take up a post as clerk in the House of Commons, he had not abandoned the intention of pursuing the advocate's profession. Besides trying his hand at journalism, he continued his legal studies. The House of Commons clerkship, which his father had obtained for him, carried with it a salary of £300 a year. But he must very soon have begun to hope that politics would be his true career. The House of Commons exercised at once a fascination with him, and he interested himself particularly in the *personnel* of the Irish benches in that assembly. The star of Parnell was in the ascendant, and the group of 'activist' Home Rulers proposed to carry Ireland with them at the next election. Mr. Redmond senior, who had not joined the new group, had been ailing for some time. John Redmond had come to London partly on that account, and he was there when his father died in the autumn of 1880. Young Redmond and his ambitions were well known to Parnell's lieutenants ; and Mr. T. M. Healy, according to a story told by himself, proposed that he (John Redmond) should be Parnellite candidate for the seat which Mr. Redmond senior had left vacant. Parnell asked, 'Who is Redmond ?' 'Why,' answered Mr. Healy, 'don't you know : the chap who hands out the programmes ?' 'Oh, that damned fellow !' said Parnell.<sup>1</sup> It was decided

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Healy told this story at the election of 1910, when, as an Independent Nationalist, he was aiming a derogatory wit at the leader of the official party.



finally that Mr. Healy should have the Wexford seat ; but Redmond had not long to wait for another opportunity ; and on the 21st January 1881 he was returned unopposed for the borough of New Ross in his native county.

Only twenty-four years old at the time, he had thirty-seven more years to live, and these were to be devoted wholly to the advancement of the Home Rule cause, at Westminster, in Ireland, and overseas. Unlike most of the brilliant young men whom Parnell had gathered together in his party, John Redmond, if not rich, had personal means, and, though he was subsequently called to the Irish Bar (1887 Michaelmas Term) he made little effort in the Courts, appearing only in a few political cases. His colleagues, many of whom became rich and celebrated, or both, in various professions, often wondered at John Redmond's practical abstention from all activity but that of politics. Such a great orator could have made—as Mr. Healy, no friend of his, once declared—£10,000 a year at the Bar. The reasons were, no doubt, several : in the first place, there was not the same spur of economic necessity in his case as in that of men like Mr. Healy, Mr. Thomas Sexton, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor. Secondly—and in this he resembled Mr. Dillon—he found in politics an all-sufficing interest and excitement. It may be added, thirdly, that John Redmond, although a man of orderly habit and one who never neglected duty, was never such a 'glutton for work' as Mr. Healy, Mr. O'Connor, and others of the young men whom Parnell trained to do his bidding.

## CHAPTER III

### EARLY POLITICAL LIFE

JOHN REDMOND had at least one experience in Irish politics before becoming a member of the Irish Party. This was at Enniscorthy in Co. Wexford, in 1880. Parnell had just returned from an important tour in America. While there he had met leaders of the *Clan-na-Gael* and founded the American Land League. His objective had been, to quote his biographer, 'the union of all Irishmen, not only in Ireland but all over the world, against England.' Nevertheless, he had not succeeded completely in conciliating every representative of advanced Nationalism, as there were still large numbers of believers in the methods of open physical force as contrasted with Parliamentary obstruction, the boycott, and the semi-constitutional methods of the land struggle. Parnell had nominated Mr. Barry and Mr. Byrne his candidates at the Enniscorthy election, and with John Redmond went south to speak for them. They were opposed by the priests, on the one side, and the Fenians on the other, were refused a hearing, and attacked by a mob, Mr. Redmond being knocked down, and cut in the face. Parnell smiled at the mishap of his young supporter. 'Well,' said he, 'you have shed blood for me at all events.'

The incident, as reported in Mr. Redmond's own words, is interesting as showing how completely

he had fallen under the fascinating spell of the enigmatic Parnell. It is interesting, too, from the point of view of the moralist who surveys impartially the repetitions of Irish history. Most of the members of Parnell's Parliamentary Party, including Parnell himself, in those days were extremists in the sense that they sympathised with the Fenian demand for complete separation from England. 'None of us,' said Parnell at Rochester, U.S.A., 'will rest until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England.' The question at issue in Enniscorthy was one of method rather than of aim. Many of the fighting Nationalists of the country, though they admired and respected Parnell, and believed that he was genuinely a separatist, still asserted the futility of the Parliamentary action which he recommended. Parnell, as we know, finally converted the mass of the Irish people, and almost all the fighting Nationalists with them, to his own policy, and for a space of thirty years or more none save the wilder idealists and individualists objected to the employment of the Parliamentary weapon. In that time Mr. Redmond had succeeded Parnell as Irish leader. We know how, after a long period of almost unquestioned authority, he found himself, in the last two years of his life, opposed by those same forces, resurgent, which had drawn blood from him on the occasion of his first appearance on a public platform. Between 1914 and 1918 Irish fighting Nationalism repudiated Parliamentaryism and returned to the standpoint of 1879.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is true, of course, that the Redmond of 1914 was a much more moderate man than the Redmond of the Enniscorthy meeting, and that



I have elsewhere dwelt upon the points of likeness and dissimilarity between Redmond and Parnell. It may, however, be well to say once more that Redmond never shared Parnell's curious but deep-seated contempt for English institutions, and English ways and the English mind.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Redmond's gradual development of opinion in an Imperialist direction was inevitable; indeed the fact is that from the first he contemplated the spectacle of Anglo-Saxon civilisation with a sentiment akin to awe. During the early years of the Parnellite movement, however—and at other periods too—the opinions which he expressed more than once with regard to the relations between Ireland and England were virtually those of a separatist of Parnell's type; nor did he ever advocate a return of the Irish Party to the wholly loyalist position occupied by Isaac Butt in the 'seventies. There was, in practice, no shadow of disagreement between Parnell and his able young lieutenant.

Moreover, in one important sense Mr. Redmond's general standpoint in politics was nearer to Parnell's than the standpoint of Mr. John Dillon, Michael Davitt, and several other colleagues. Like Parnell, Mr. Redmond scarcely shared the social revolutionary spirit which inspired much of the agitation of the Land League. It is not to say that he did not recognise and feel for the misery of the small Irish tenant farmer, or that he did not desire the establishment of a peasant proprietary, with, to that the great *Sinn Féin* revolt was due not merely to disillusion in regard to parliamentary action, but to the fact that Mr. Redmond had led, or was charged with leading, the Irish Parliamentary Party upon a too conciliatory plan.

<sup>1</sup> 'He acted like a foreigner,' Sir Charles Dilke said of Parnell.



extent, the downfall of the landlords in Ireland. But he was not in his element in what took on, in effect, the character of a social revolution. He was not a democratic leveller like Davitt. Had Ireland been a self-governing country in the early 'eighties, and Mr. Redmond Prime Minister, we may be sure that he would have proposed a reform of the land system; equally sure, however, that he would have discouraged, taken action against, many of the methods adopted by the agrarian agitators. It may be remarked that Michael Davitt, who was the true father of the Land League, always suspected Mr. Redmond of being a reactionary on the economic and social side—not, of course, on the political. His views on social and economic questions as they affected Ireland were, indeed, rather those of an English Liberal than of an Irish revolutionary. When men like Parnell and Redmond identified themselves with radical enterprises like the Land League it was partly for the purpose of maintaining a national unity of means and ends, and partly because such enterprises served to intimidate British statesmen and made Ireland difficult for them to govern, thus improving the prospects of Home Rule.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Redmond's first experience as a member of the House of Commons was as exciting as his first experience on an Irish platform. At the very

<sup>1</sup> John Devoy, the Clan-na-Gael leader, offered in 1878 to support Parnell on condition that for the federal demand of Isaac Butt should be substituted a general declaration in favour of Irish self-government. The condition was accepted by the Parliamentary Party. Parnell was (at least at first) a revolutionist working with constitutional weapons. A united Ireland was Parnell's *sine qua non*, and hence he refused to quarrel either with the neo-Fenians or the extremist agrarian agitators.—*Vide Barry O'Brien, Life of Parnell.*

moment of his election a great Parliamentary fight was in progress. The occasion was the passage of Gladstone's Coercion Bill, which was being sternly resisted by some twenty Parnellites. Mr. Redmond dashed across from Wexford to do his share, and arrived weary and travel-stained at Westminster. Parnell had been pursuing the policy of obstruction, and the House, after a continuous sitting of twenty-four hours, was in the worst of tempers. Nine weeks altogether had been spent on the Bill: a nine weeks' coercion struggle which, as Mr. T. P. O'Connor afterwards said, made the Irish Party, and thereby gave unity, strength, cohesion to the great struggle for the restoration of national rights.

When Redmond arrived, Parnell himself was speaking in face of a hundred turbulent and noisy Englishmen. Never had Redmond been more impressed by that pale-featured, calm aristocrat. Then suddenly the end came. Mr. Brand, the Speaker, whose business it was to look after the rules of the House and see that members observed them, acted with the courage of despair. He broke the rules himself by announcing that the debate was at an end. Whereupon Redmond, who was watching the proceedings from behind the Bar, saw all his future colleagues file out of the chamber in protest. They were back the next day, when Mr. Redmond took his seat and the oath. Mr. Gladstone rose to deal with the state of Irish affairs. Parnell objected, and the Speaker overruled the objection. The Irish leader objected a second time, and was named for disregarding the authority of the Speaker. Mr. Gladstone moved Parnell's suspension. The Irish refused to take part in the division, and for

this refusal were turned out of the House of Commons, addressing the Speaker as they went each in turn. Mr. Redmond was proud of the unique experience. 'I took my seat,' he said, 'made my maiden speech, and was expelled by force, all on the same day.'

Presently Mr. Redmond, after having taken his full share in the movement of opposition to the Government, appeared in the character of a constructive statesman. Events were moving in the direction of a reconciliation between the Irish and Liberals, and the Government seemed ready to acknowledge that coercion had failed. Parnell, who had been imprisoned, was released, and there was an understanding that the Land Act of 1881 could be given a fair trial by the League. At the same time Mr. Redmond introduced a new Land Bill on behalf of the party, which proposed amendments of the 1881 Act in favour of the tenants, and Gladstone replied to his speech with a promise of concession. The hopes of moderate men were, however, dashed to the ground by the political murder (May 1882) of Mr. Burke and Lord Frederick Cavendish, and, although no responsibility for the terrible deed in Phoenix Park could be attached to Mr. Parnell, the Government had again to resort to coercion. '*The Times*,' wrote Mr. T. P. O'Connor, 'suggested that the Irish population of England, unarmed and innocent, should be massacred for a crime which they abhorred, and that the Irish political leaders should be made responsible for a catastrophe which had dashed all their hopes.'

The same newspaper charged Mr. Redmond with



having approved of the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish. The misunderstanding arose as follows :

‘I was at Manchester (to quote Mr. Redmond’s own account) on the night of the Phoenix Park murder, and about to address a meeting, when an incomplete account of the affair was thrust into my hands. . . . I went to the police station to make inquiries, but they would not tell me anything. I made a speech condemning the murder of Cavendish, and saying that the Government were the real cause of the crime. *The Times* reported my speech with the comment that I said nothing about Burke. Parnell spoke to me on the subject. I told him that I did not know that Burke had been killed when I made the speech. “Then write to *The Times* and say so,” he replied. I wrote to *The Times*, but they didn’t publish the letter.’

Mr. Redmond at this time was one of the Irish Party whips, and his suavity and excellent manner stood him in good stead in these capacities. He was not a personal favourite with the leader ; but Parnell’s favourites were few—John Redmond’s brother, William, was among them. The organisers of the movement, however, appreciated Mr. Redmond’s good sense and caution, and gave him plenty of work as a speaker on English platforms. With his other colleagues Mr. Redmond was popular, although one of them afterwards said—it was during the ‘split’ in the party—that he had always been a ‘cold-hearted young gentleman.’ His more gentle upbringing may have kept him aloof from many of his colleagues.

In the winter of 1882 Mr. Redmond went to Australia and America, at the request of Parnell, in order to collect funds for the Land League. The



unpopularity of the Irish, due to the Phœnix Park murders, had spread to the British Colonies, and the young Nationalist emissary at first received a chilling reception from the Australian public. Sir Henry Parkes, the Prime Minister, proposed that he should be expelled, and all the respectable people who had promised to support the cause kept away from the meetings. Even the priests, except some Jesuits, who were friendly to an old Clongowes boy, remained aloof. But the Irish working men stood by Mr. Redmond and 'kept him going until telegrams arrived exculpating the Parliamentary Party.' Ultimately, having collected £15,000, he proceeded to America, where he was received with open arms by the Fenians. 'Without the Fenians,' he afterwards told Mr. Barry O'Brien, 'we could have done nothing.' There was a great meeting at the Opera House, Chicago, at which Boyle O'Reilly, an exiled patriot and revolutionist, took the chair. 'It was a grand sight. It was grand to see the Irish united as they were then. I was escorted to the meeting by the Governor and the Mayor, and the streets were lined with soldiers, who presented arms as we passed.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Redmond's tour lasted over two years. He was accompanied on the Australian part by his brother, William Redmond, who had now overcome his social prejudices, and become one of the keenest adherents of the Parnellite movement. John and William both married before their return to Ireland. The meeting with their future wives took place at the house of Mr. Michael Dalton, of Sydney. John Redmond married the daughter, and William

<sup>1</sup> Barry O'Brien, *Life of Parnell*.

Redmond the niece, of Mr. Dalton. The unions were very happy ones.<sup>1</sup>

On his return home, John Redmond completed his terms at King's Inn, Dublin, and at Gray's Inn, London ; but the turn of events in politics kept him occupied in other directions than that of the law. Gladstone had been converted to Home Rule, and was about to stake the fortunes of the Liberal Party upon a forthcoming measure of Irish self-government. The Bill was introduced in 1886, and Mr. Redmond, in common with the whole Irish Party, accepted its terms, if not as a final settlement of the Irish question, at least as a measure that approached a satisfaction of Nationalist desires. The Bill of 1886, by excluding Irish members from Westminster, fell under no suspicion of being that 'Federal solution' which Butt and the loyal Home Rulers had advocated, and with which the neo-Fenian supporters of Parnell refused to have anything to do. Both in 1886 and 1893 Mr. Redmond was a separatist to the extent that he upheld Ireland's right to the *status* of a Dominion in the Empire ; and he believed that the Home Rule Bill of 1886 sufficiently satisfied that right. While, however, he still proposed that Irish affairs and British affairs should be dissociated as far as possible, he no longer—if he had ever done so—envisaged the future of Ireland as that of a Sovereign State, wholly 'on its own' in the world. Many anti-English speeches of his of this and a later date may be quoted, but after his visit to Australia nothing ever fell from his lips that was truly inconsistent with the theory of a Liberal

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Redmond's second wife, whom he married in middle age, was Miss Beazley, of Cheltenham.

Imperialism. He spoke of Ireland as becoming independent of England, but the ideal that he had in mind was that of interdependence, equally in relation to England and the self-governing Colonies.

Gladstone failed to pass his Home Rule Bill through the House of Commons, and the return of the Conservatives to power was accompanied by a revival of agrarian disturbances in Ireland. Mr. Balfour became Chief-Secretary and instituted a coercive *régime*. Among his victims was Mr. Redmond, who in 1888 went to prison for the first and only time in his life. The offence was that of using the language of intimidation against a certain landlord of the name of Colonel Walker, in a speech at Scaráwalsh. Mr. Redmond, who conducted his own defence in the police court at Ferns, argued that he had been unfairly interpreted. Colonel Walker's eviction of a tenant was the subject of his speech; this injustice, said Mr. Redmond, would cry out against the Colonel wherever he went, no new tenant would take the farm, and the Colonel would have arrayed against him the united hostility of the entire people among whom he lived. Mr. Redmond argued in the police court that he had used the language of prophecy, not of intimidation, but it was in vain. He suffered five weeks' imprisonment as an ordinary criminal, sleeping on a plank-bed at night, and in the day-time exercising among the pickpockets or studying the Bible—the only book allowed to him!

The year 1889 was a quiet one, so far as Mr. Redmond was concerned. Hope ran high in Irish politics, and the co-operation of the English Liberals in the Home Rule Party grew more close than ever.



Ireland was wholly united under Parnell, and the breakdown of the charges against the Irish leader in connection with the murders in the Phoenix Park created an extraordinary jubilation. Mr. Balfour's coercion *régime* continued, but its days were evidently numbered. The next year disaster overtook the Irish cause.

In November Captain O'Shea, a former Irish member, filed a petition for divorce on the grounds of his wife's adultery with Parnell; the suit was undefended, and the Court granted a decree *nisi* for the separation of Captain and Mrs. O'Shea. The proceedings had been pending for some months, during which time it was commonly assumed that, whatever the verdict of the Court, Parnell's political position would be unaltered.

On November 18th, a day after the verdict, the National League held a meeting in Dublin. Mr. Redmond presided, and all the speakers—including some men who afterwards repudiated Parnell—declared for the *status quo*. Nothing had happened to necessitate a change of leadership. Messrs. William O'Brien, Dillon, and O'Connor, who were in America, signified their assent to the action of the League. Mr. Redmond then visited Mr. Healy, and arranged for a great Parnellite demonstration in the Leinster Hall, Dublin. He was afterwards accused of having acted with a too great precipitancy in so committing the party to an unconditional support of Parnell; but, in fact, a glance at the speeches which were delivered at the historic Dublin demonstration shows that on the face of things no difference whatever existed between the attitude of Redmond and that of the men who a few weeks

later were themselves, under the direction of Gladstone, to drive Parnell out of public life. Mr. Redmond said no more than the others—namely, that Parnell's statesmanship was essential to the Home Rule cause. But already on the side of the Liberal allies of Home Rule voices of dissent had been raised, and on the 24th November Gladstone hinted that his party had been greatly embarrassed by the proceedings in the Divorce Court, and might lose Nonconformist support at the General Election if Parnell failed to retire. The Irish Party, however, met at Westminster, and re-elected Parnell to be chairman; next day they were confronted by Gladstone's letter to Mr. Morley, which was, in effect, a declaration that the Liberal leader would be unable to work any longer with Parnell.

Mr. Redmond had no hesitations. He was not averse from private negotiations for an arrangement under which—in view of the English situation—Parnell would temporarily retire from the leadership. But he could not consider such a course as the open repudiation of an Irish leader by Irishmen at the demand of an English party. Gladstone's letter had been published in the Press, and amounted to nothing less than an *ultimatum*. A majority of the Irish members, however, prepared to bow to the Nonconformist conscience. Although re-election to the chair had been unanimous, the Irish leader knew that it was only upon a handful of his followers he could really rely; and among these were John and William Redmond, Colonel Nolan, Mr. J. J. Kelly, and Mr. Leamy. Parnell particularly appreciated the devotion of William Redmond, for he recognised that it was wholly personal. William

Redmond declared that, whatever might be the question of political expediency, he would remain faithful, and Parnell felt consoled and encouraged. 'You were always,' he said, 'one of the most single-minded and attached of my colleagues.'

The party met to reconsider the situation in Committee Room XV, and there Parnell—although never had he given a finer display of his genius for leadership—suffered defeat. In the debates that then took place Mr. Redmond's own ability won for the first time a proper recognition. Lord Morley writes in his *Life of Gladstone* concerning the proceedings in the committee room that 'no case was ever better opened at Westminster than in the three speeches made on the first day by Mr. Sexton and Mr. Healy on the one side, and Mr. Redmond on the other. . . . In gravity, dignity, acute perception, and that good faith which is the soul of real as distinct from specious debate, the Parliamentary critic recognises them all as of the first order.' Justin M'Carthy, himself an anti-Parnellite, wrote of Redmond that 'he took the leading part on the side of the minority. He became the foremost champion of Parnell's leadership. The position seemed to him in the nature of things. I well remember the ability and the eloquence which he displayed in these debates and the telling manner in which he put his argument and his appeals; and the course he took was all the more to his credit, because Parnell had never singled him out as an object of special favour, and indeed, in the opinion of many of us, had not done full justice to his services in the House of Commons.'

Mr. Redmond, like Parnell himself, put the



Parnellite case upon a basis of cold reason. 'When we are asked,' he exclaimed, 'to sell our leader to preserve the English alliance, it seems to me we are bound to inquire what we are getting for the price we are paying.' Parnell's tactics were to put the moral question aside, and even the question of loyalty, and to ask, 'If I retire, will you (my opponents) be able to secure satisfactory guarantees from Gladstone and the Liberals with regard to the terms of the forthcoming Home Rule Bill?'

A prospective bargain of this sort led to the celebrated Boulogne negotiations, in which Mr. Redmond played a prominent part. He cabled to Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Dillon, who were in America, that an accommodation might be arranged were a meeting held between Mr. O'Brien and Parnell. Mr. O'Brien left America and travelled to Boulogne, which was the place appointed for the conference. Mr. Redmond accompanied Parnell to France. It was first proposed that Parnell should retire from the leadership on the terms that he should have the right to nominate his successor. Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Dillon were the principal candidates, and of the two Parnell preferred Mr. O'Brien, though he doubted if either was capable of coping with Gladstone.

Throughout the negotiations Mr. Redmond's desire was to effect a settlement by every means short of an absolute surrender of Parnellite principle; Mr. O'Brien on his part was equally conciliatory. Parnell's own enigmatic attitude was, however, interpreted by Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Redmond in opposite ways. Mr. O'Brien thought that Parnell listened seriously to the proposals for his retirement,

and intended to fall in with the schemes of the 'peace-makers.' Mr. Redmond said, on the other hand, 'I feel that O'Brien and myself are being treated like a pair of children,' and refused to continue negotiations *ad infinitum*. Parnell had returned to his position of Committee Room XV, and declined to treat on the question of leadership except in connection with Liberal guarantees regarding the next Home Rule Bill. The Boulogne 'conversations' finally broke down. They furnished matter for dispute and recrimination between rival Irish politicians for many a long day, but Mr. Redmond's zeal for peace in them was never disputed.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MANTLE OF PARNELL

THE Boulogne negotiations failed early in 1891, and Parnell died nine months later. In the intervening period he fought a losing battle with a desperation unexampled in modern politics. Against a combination of the Gladstonians, the priests, and the agrarian party his appeal was to romantic Ireland, to the fighting Nationalists, the neo-Fenians of the early 'eighties, and he rallied these to his side with the cry of 'No English dictation.'

Mr. Redmond's share in the final struggle was slight. Indeed, he abstained from attending partisan demonstrations during the summer of 1891. Anti-Parnellite orators taunted him with having 'backed the wrong horse,' and even suggested that he was reconsidering his position towards Parnell. The taunt was unfounded. A certain pessimism in regard to Irish affairs may have settled upon the young and ardent politician for a while, and, for the rest, domestic concerns accounted for this inactivity. He had no thought of joining the anti-Parnellites, though he may have had a thought of abandoning public life altogether. 'I am doing my best,' he had written to Mr. O'Brien early in 1891, 'but, as I fear, my influence is less than ever.'

The stimulus of personal loyalty to Parnell finally conquered this depression, and he found himself fit



to face the tragic winter of 1891-2 with a strong if sad heart. He was one of those summoned to Brighton by Mrs. Parnell after her husband's death, and the arrangements for the national funeral were put into his hands. He shared with all that was best in Nationalist Ireland the deep emotion of that October of 1891 :

‘ Ah ! the sere autumn day,  
When the sad last troop came,  
Swift down the ancient way,  
Bearing a chieftain's fame.

Grey hope was there and dread,  
Anger and love and tears ;  
We mourned the drear and dead  
Dirge of the ruin'd years.

A mother and forget ?  
Nay ! All her children's fate  
Ireland remembers yet  
With love insatiate.’<sup>1</sup>

The Irish literary movement was in its infancy, and poets, who had hitherto given little attention to politics, were enthusiastic for the Parnellite cause that had now been entrusted to John Redmond. He went among the young poets of New Ireland—Katharine Tynan, W. B. Yeats, Dora Shorter, Maud Gonne—and delighted them with his simplicity, eloquence, and charm of manner.

Presently the new leader issued a manifesto which thrilled the heart of youth. ‘ On the threshold of the tomb the leader whom we mourn defined our duty in these memorable words : “ If I were dead and gone to-morrow, the men who are fighting

<sup>1</sup> Lionel Johnson.

English influence in Irish public life would fight on still. They would still be independent Nationalists, they would still believe in the future of Ireland as a nation: and they would still protest that it was not by taking orders from an English member that Ireland's future could be saved, protected, or secured." Fellow-countrymen, let it be to the glory of our race at home and abroad to act up to the spirit of this message. God save Ireland.'

A very few days after Parnell's funeral Mr. Redmond accepted the position of leader of that minority of the Parliamentarians who had refused to desert Parnell. His principal colleagues were Mr. T. C. Harrington, Mr. Edmund Leamy, and an ex-Fenian, Mr. O'Kelly. An extreme anti-Englishism distinguished the utterances of his followers—some of whom deliberately sought to break up the constitutional Parliamentary agitation and recreate a movement of physical force. Others, under stress of emotion, had lost all sense of political direction. Among the latter was young William Redmond, though we know from the manner of his death in the recent war how little dominated by race hatred was this generous soul.

The elder Redmond preferred to refrain from similar violences. Indeed, he now more than ever before displayed his characteristic virtues of dignity and good manners. A critic hostile to all the Parliamentarians once alluded to the 'split' as the 'sweeping-brush' era in Irish politics, but admitted that none of its 'foul memories' spoiled John Redmond's name. 'He touched with perfect good-humour even the quarrels of his rivals.' Nevertheless his little party met with one disaster after

another, and its representation at Westminster was at one time reduced to the ludicrous figure of nine. Mr. Redmond offered himself as a candidate for the large city of Cork, and was routed hopelessly. Later on, not without the help of Unionist votes, he found a refuge in Waterford, the city which was to remain faithful to him during the remainder of his life, and after his death chose his son as its representative.

It was certainly a curious position which he now occupied, depending as he did for succour not only upon the neo-Fenian anti-Parliamentarians, but also in some degree upon Irish Unionists, who inclined to back the Parnellite minority. 'Extremes meet,' and the Unionists forgave John Redmond his declarations in favour of an independent Parliament out of consideration for his hostility to Gladstone—the man whom they hated most—the political priests, and the agrarians. He won encomiums from both Irish and English Unionists—a fact to which the anti-Parnellites did not fail to call attention! Here was a sign, said they, that Parnellism had entered upon purely destructive courses.

The second Home Rule Bill was now about to be introduced, and the reactionaries everywhere anticipated that Mr. Redmond, aided by the Irish-Americans (whom he had recently visited), would give both it and Gladstone their *coup de grâce*. They were disappointed. In the debates on the Bill of 1893 Redmond gained a reputation not only for oratory, but for constructive statesmanship. Sir Henry Lucy, the famous Parliamentary critic, expressed the general opinion when he declared that Redmond's 'style' based itself upon a substratum



of solid knowledge, sound common sense, and a statesmanlike capacity to review a complicated situation. Not that the Bill, which was finally carried in the House of Commons by a majority of forty-three votes, met with his ardent approval. He described it as 'like a toad, ugly and venomous, which yet wore a precious jewel in its head.'

In substance the Bill did not differ greatly from the proposals of 1886, with the exception that an Irish delegation of eighty members was to be entitled to attend at Westminster whenever Irish affairs were under discussion. Mr. Redmond had supported the proposals of 1886. His criticisms of the proposals of 1893 were able and sincere ; we may, nevertheless, suppose that they were fewer than would have been the case had his position been one of greater power. As the leader of a band of nine men only his Parliamentary action could not have a decisive influence. The House of Lords had in any event determined to reject the Bill, and this it did on September 8th.

The next year Gladstone retired from public life, and, with the advent of Lord Rosebery as Liberal Prime Minister, the Redmondite position was considerably strengthened—morally, at least—for, while Gladstone had a great name among the Irish and was genuinely trusted, Lord Rosebery had no claim to the trust of Nationalists. The new Premier at once announced that the Liberal Party had weakened upon the subject of Home Rule. He said that England, the 'predominant partner,' must first be convinced of the desirability of Home Rule before the Liberals could renew any efforts at legislation. There should be a Home Rule majority in Parliament independent of Irish votes. He proposed as

an alternative the substitution of local self-government, which Redmond at once denounced as a compromise on a compromise. In spite of Lord Rosebery's declarations, the anti-Parnellite Nationalists continued to support the Government, for the not unobscure reason that their funds were being largely supplemented by the donations of rich English Liberals. Lord Rosebery's attitude, however, did not save the old Gladstonian party from a terrible defeat at the elections of 1895, and, as may be imagined, the general effect of these events in Ireland was a decline in the reputation of the anti-Parnellite leaders, who were, moreover, bitterly divided among themselves. It was now certain that very strong efforts towards a reconciliation of the rival Nationalist groups would be made, and that John Redmond—as the man who stood clear of any responsibility for the disastrous and discredited Liberal alliance—would be the strongest candidate for the chairmanship of a reunited party.

On the occasion of Lord Rosebery's acceptance of the Premiership, Redmond had issued a manifesto, which is worth quoting, as it sums up the position of the Parnellites at that time :

‘As if in mockery of the hopes that were excited in Ireland, the Prime Minister, whose continuance in office was the pledge of Home Rule, is cast aside, and a member of the House of Lords appointed in his stead. In Lord Rosebery and his present Cabinet we can have no confidence, and we warn our fellow-countrymen to have none ; they will concede just as much to Ireland as she extorts by organisation among her people and absolute unfettered independence of English parties in her representatives.’

Lord Rosebery's views were those of the Imperialist section of the Liberal party, of which Mr. Asquith, the Home Secretary, was a principal member. Many years later Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond were to work together in friendly collaboration towards Home Rule. In 1893-4, however, the two men came into conflict more than once, chiefly over the question of amnesty for certain persons who had been found guilty some years previously of connection with dynamite outrages and the like. Mr. Redmond urged that these men were not common criminals, and he declared further that no Irishman, however extreme in methods, deserved censure if he had suffered for his devotion to the national cause—a generous but, as after the rising of 1916 he was to find to his own cost, a dangerous doctrine. He also reminded the House of Commons that he had himself, on the occasion of his imprisonment in the 'eighties, been treated 'as a pickpocket or an ordinary criminal.' The British Cabinet through Mr. Asquith refused to hearken to Mr. Redmond's plea, and the men had to serve the remainder of their sentence. One of those who survived the ordeal was, it is curious to note, Thomas Clarke, a signatory to the Republican manifesto who was executed in May 1916, for participation in a rising denounced by Mr. Redmond himself as a 'criminal enterprise.'

In 1896 there was a change in the leadership of the anti-Parnellite Parliamentarians. Mr. Justin M'Carthy retired for reasons of advancing age, and Mr. John Dillon occupied the vacant chair. Subsequently the anti-Parnellites met in Dublin, and proposed a resolution in favour of independence of all the entanglements of English party alliances—



—the principle for which Mr. Redmond had contended. The anti-Parnellites, however, were now more bitterly divided among themselves than ever, Mr. T. M. Healy having formed a dissentient group which would not accept Mr. Dillon's leadership at any price. In 1897 Mr. Redmond, with a view to unity, proposed the following aims as those suitable to an Irish Nationalist movement—(1) Home Rule, (2) Independence of all parties, (3) Manhood suffrage, (4) Agitation against the over-taxation of Ireland, (5) Amnesty of the political prisoners, (6) Land Reform. Mr. William O'Brien was meanwhile very active in the endeavour to infuse new vitality into the agrarian movement by the foundation of the United Irish League.

But all parties were in sad straits, and the Unionists, naturally enough, were in high spirits, although the ascendancy party in Ireland could not wholly approve of the aim of the Balfour brothers, which was to kill Home Rule finally by kindness. Mr. Gerald Balfour, the Chief-Secretary, working in close co-operation with Sir Horace Plunkett, set up what was called the Recess Committee, to which all parties in Ireland were invited. The object was to devise means for developing Irish agricultural and industrial resources. While the Dillonites were very suspicious, Mr. Redmond argued, with a greater faith, that anything which tended to an increase in the material prosperity of the country could only in the long run strengthen the demand for national self-government. He therefore accepted a seat on the Recess Committee along with such Unionists as the O'Connor Don and Lord Mayo, and was a signatory of the famous report which led to the

establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland.

In a similar spirit Mr. Redmond welcomed Mr. Gerald Balfour's Local Government Bill of 1898, which, as he said afterwards, 'made the Irish people masters of all the finance and local affairs of Ireland'; yet he had in his mind no thought of regarding the measure as in any sense a substitute for the national demand of a Parliament with an Executive responsible to it. He even urged that in the working of local government more even than a proper share of fair play should be shown to Irish Unionists and Protestants—always with a view to disarming the fears which this minority of the population had shown in regard to Home Rule. Again, he enthusiastically initiated the establishment of a non-political agitation having as its end a revision of the financial arrangements between Ireland and Great Britain, on the need for which all Irishmen were agreed. It was largely owing to his energy that there was set up a Commission to inquire into the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland. The report of the Commission, signed by English experts as well as by Irish representatives, of whom Mr. Redmond was one, showed that Ireland was being overtaxed to the extent of two and three-quarter millions *per annum*.

In short, during all these years of Unionist government prior to the outbreak of the South African War, Mr. Redmond succeeded better than any of his rivals for the Irish leadership in asserting the purity and independence of the National cause and, at the same time, in calming the fears of those of his fellow-countrymen who had looked upon Home

Rule as significant only of social and religious intolerance.

Before the establishment of the United Irish League there had been three Nationalist organisations—the National Federation of Mr. Dillon's party, Mr. Redmond's National League, and Mr. Healy's People's Rights Association. The United Irish League made a fourth. It had at first a purely agrarian end, having grown out of the discontent which prevailed in the congested districts in the west of Ireland. Mr. Redmond did not at this time share Mr. O'Brien's eagerness to revive the land agitation in its old acute form; his hope was rather for a softening of the class struggle. He had spoken on the occasion of the passing of the Local Government Bill of his desire that the landlords should assist in a proper working of the Bill—nothing, he thought, would constitute a better argument for Home Rule than that. A new agrarian movement such as Mr. O'Brien contemplated would, as he saw, destroy the prospect, slight though it was, of converting the Irish gentry to patriotic principles. Nevertheless the League began to sweep all before it at the first elections held under the Local Government Act, and the Parliamentary parties realised that the country was reuniting itself independently of their help. As the General Election of 1900 was in sight, some working arrangement between the Irish leaders became essential.

Peace in the end came quite suddenly. At the opening of the session of 1900 Mr. Dillon announced his resignation of the office of chairman of the Irish Parnellites, and begged his personal followers that, in the event of a reunion of Irish forces, they



would elect a leader from the Parnellites. After that the choice was certain to fall upon John Redmond, who had just returned from a most successful tour in America, where he had been collecting funds for a Parnell memorial. The Irish members in a body met and 'in the name of Ireland' declared that divisions were over, and that one united party would henceforth act in accordance with the principles and under the constitution of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1885 to 1890.

Mr. Redmond's success was generally appreciated in Ireland, and even in England—where the reunion had aroused sarcastic comments—there were grudging admissions of the ability of the new leader. None of the Irish members was at that time popular in England, owing to the attitude of hostility which they had adopted towards the British cause in the South African War. *The Times*, when alluding to the pro-Boer spirit in Ireland, argued that Mr. Redmond had been elected to the chair because he represented the most violent and irreconcilable of the Nationalist elements. It is true that Mr. Redmond had suggested in one speech that England's difficulties abroad might be Ireland's opportunity at home; the context showed, however, that he had no thought of appealing to armed force. But even while Mr. Redmond made pro-Boer speeches as strong as any man's, there was in England as well as in Ireland a general, if unexpressed, recognition of his natural tendency towards moderation. The real truth was that Mr. Redmond, by accepting the leadership of the reunited party, had broken with the extremists in Ireland who had supported him since the split. The aim of the latter had been the

destruction of the constitutional and Parliamentary movement, and, however much they may have honoured the memory of Parnell, nothing was further from their desires than a return to the compromise of the 'eighties.

At the General Election of 1900, held on the issues of the South African War, the Unionists were returned to power by a large majority over the combined forces of the Liberals and Nationalists. A renewal of Home Rule proposals seemed to be further off than ever. The Nationalist attitude towards the Boer War had seriously affected English feeling, and the Imperialist wing of the Liberal Party, led by Lord Rosebery, Lord Haldane, and Sir Edward Grey, wished to cut itself off from all connection, even in Opposition, with men who had cheered the news of reverses to the British arms.

In 1900 Queen Victoria, then in extreme old age, took a fancy to visit Ireland as a mark of appreciation of the deeds of Irish soldiers in South Africa. Mr. Redmond and his colleagues were unable to advise that she should receive from Nationalist corporations and public bodies any token of loyal welcome. The position thus adopted recommended itself as necessary, for, if the Queen had received anything like an official reception from Nationalists, the occasion would have been exploited by the political opponents of the Irish Party; it would have been argued that the Home Rule demand was weakening, and that the Irish Party's attitude towards the Boer War had been repudiated by the people. The fact was that the Irish people were thoroughly in sympathy with the Boers, and Mr.

Redmond's criticism of the war erred, from the popular point of view, on the side of moderation. He did not wish to offend British opinion unnecessarily, and he disapproved of insult being offered to the British army and to Irish soldiers. His extremist colleagues, like Michael Davitt, wholly rejected every counsel of expediency, and would have preferred to let Home Rule lie in abeyance for a century rather than abstain from offering the Boer Republics whatever help might be in their power.

At the conclusion of the war, Irish interest concentrated itself again upon the domestic land problem. Mr. Redmond ruled the Parliamentarians at Westminster with great tact and sympathy, and all the former warring elements—except that which Mr. Healy represented—had coalesced with extraordinary ease. Within Ireland, however, the man of the hour was William O'Brien, the founder of the United Irish League. Mr. Redmond's strength lay in Parliament, and in the management of those with whom he came into direct contact. The respect and admiration which his personality won among the Nationalist members lasted until the end of his life, and, to this respect and admiration, enthusiasm was often added. Nationalist members were ready to compare Redmond advantageously with Parnell, to find that he had all the former leader's skill without the former leader's faults, to repose on him the completest trust. The country at large, however, although it also trusted Mr. Redmond, extended to others—now to Mr. O'Brien, now to Michael Davitt, now to Mr. Dillon—a larger tribute of popularity. Mr. Redmond did not aspire to be



a native agitator, and, when he accepted the agrarian programme of the United Irish League, it was chiefly as a means to the political end of Irish Parliamentary unity. The League's chief value in his eyes was that of a necessary electoral organisation which would reintroduce order and discipline into Nationalist politics.

The Government, by appointing Mr. George Wyndham as Chief-Secretary, signalised its adhesion to a policy of reform, and in 1902 an important Land Purchase Bill was introduced into the House of Commons. As the Bill did not meet Mr. O'Brien's approval, the League issued orders to the Parliamentarians for its rejection. Mr. O'Brien had demanded the compulsory buying out of the landlords, and the measure proffered by Mr. Wyndham was designed merely to quicken the rate of purchase under previous Acts. This action upon the part of the League was necessarily followed on the one hand by extremely violent measures on the part of the agrarians and, on the other, by a repressive Governmental policy. 'No less than ten members of Parliament (one or two of them with an exceeding ill grace) soon found themselves within prison walls, and it was manifest to all men, and most manifest of all to Mr. Wyndham, that we were only at the beginning of the upheaval.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Redmond loyally shared all the risks, and was at one moment in danger of being prosecuted for conspiracy by the trust which the landlords had organised for self-protection.

Then, all of a sudden, Mr. O'Brien changed his tactics, and issued directions for a cessation of

<sup>1</sup> *The Olive Branch in Ireland*, by William O'Brien.

hostilities. As a result, not many months had passed before representatives of the tenants and landlords were sitting at a round table in Dublin in the endeavour to find terms, agreeable to both, out of which Mr. Wyndham should construct another Land Bill. There is no doubt that Mr. Redmond welcomed the more genial atmosphere; he accepted the proposal for a Conference (originally brought forward from the landlords' side by Captain Shaw Taylor) in a spirit of true statesmanship, and was nominated to act, along with Mr. O'Brien and Mr. T. W. Russell, in the interests of the tenants, Mr. Harrington, then Lord Mayor of Dublin, occupying the chair. The meetings with the landlords opened on December 20, 1902, soon after Mr. Redmond's return from a short American tour.

The results of the Conference were good, although not all that Mr. O'Brien had demanded in war time could be conceded at the peace negotiations. The landlord representation agreed upon the desirability of peasant proprietorship, and a proposal that the taxpayer should make up differences of price was unanimously accepted by both sides. Thus the idea of compelling the landlords was abandoned by the tenants' party, and there was substituted for it the notion of making sales so attractive financially as to ensure a widespread transfer of property throughout the country. Landlords were to be assured of second term net incomes, and occupiers' rents were to be reduced by not less than 20 *per cent.* There was to be a complete settlement of the evicted tenants' question. Mr. Redmond and the other delegates regarded the State bonus as 'the beginning and the end, the marrow and

the breath of life, of the Land Conference Agreement.' <sup>1</sup>

Mr. O'Brien, rushing from one extreme to another, had hailed the outcome of the Conference as marking an end of the Irish class war ; a declaration which greatly vexed sturdy democrats like Michael Davitt and Radicals like Mr. John Dillon. Mr. Redmond, without expressing so great an enthusiasm, honestly supported a Report to which he had put his signature. He was eager for national appeasement, and a policy of conciliation harmonised, as Mr. O'Brien observed truly, with all his inborn sympathies and taste. His action at the Conference was approved at the next meeting of the National Directory of the League ; and in various speeches he disposed of legends circulated by the extremists to the effect that the Conference had recommended tenants to pay thirty-three years' purchase for their lands. 'They need not pay more,' he said, 'than the average amount (20 or 22 years' purchase) paid by others in recent years.'

Mr. Wyndham's legislative measure, however, was not as good as had been hoped. It fell short of the suggestions of the Land Conference both as regards the amount of bonus offered as a bridge between landlord and tenant, and also as regards the reduction of the tenants' annuities. The majority of landlords and tenants desired, however, that the Bill should pass into law, and this happened ; largely owing to Mr. Redmond's moderate states-

<sup>1</sup> The Irish as well as the English taxpayer had, of course, to contribute to this bonus. All the rest of the expense of financing the subsequent measure was borne for the first five years by the Irish taxpayer.



manship and his consummate Parliamentary ability, the wrecking designs of the extremists on either side were frustrated. Over large parts of the country, farmers took advantage of the new Act, and, generally, in spite of the continued carpings of Mr. Dillon and of the *Freeman's Journal*, people saw the point of an excellent story related by John Redmond in a speech at Arklow on September 15, 1905 :

‘ We read from time to time criticisms to this effect : “ Oh, the people could have purchased their holdings under the Ashbourne Act for seventeen years’ purchase.” Could they ? If they could then there was no need for this Bill. I was talking the other day to a farmer in County Wicklow, and he said this very thing to me. He said, “ But, sir, we could have purchased our holdings under the old Bill for seventeen years’ purchase.” And I said to him, “ Why didn’t you ? ” And he answered “ Oh, the landlord would not sell.” That is the whole question in a nutshell.’

The Act did not turn out to be a final settlement, but was, nevertheless, epoch-making, in that it made peasant proprietorship the basis of the Irish land system. Mr. Redmond’s work in connection with the Conference, the passage of the measure, and its acceptance in Ireland must be numbered among the most important achievements of his life.

Meanwhile he was confronted by a crisis in Irish political circles caused by the disturbed relations of his two principal followers, Mr. William O’Brien and Mr. John Dillon. Mr. O’Brien and Mr. John Dillon had been taking very different views of the progress of affairs in Ireland. Mr. O’Brien, delighted at the outcome of the Land Conference, proposed that the Home Rule question itself should be attacked

along similar lines ; and he expressed the most optimistic opinions of Mr. Wyndham, Sir Antony MacDonnell, the Under-Secretary, and Lord Dunraven, the leader of the moderate landlords' party. Mr. O'Brien had become a convert to the doctrine of evolution in politics, and believed that a substantial measure of self-government might be obtained from the Unionist Government then in power. To this end he proposed that the Irish Party should be as conciliatory as possible towards that moderate Unionist opinion which Lord Dunraven and Mr. Wyndham represented. Mr. Dillon, who held a much lower view of the achievement of the Land Conference, considered that Mr. O'Brien was acting under the stimulus of a blind enthusiasm. He gravely distrusted the reforming landlords, and by temperament would have much preferred that the realisation of Irish hopes should come through the English Radicals. Dillon looked for the knockout blow, O'Brien advocated a peace of understanding.

Mr. Redmond put forward his best efforts as a conciliator, while at the same time accepting with perfect loyalty his responsibility for the line of action which Mr. O'Brien and himself had adopted at the Conference. His position was rendered very difficult by stories circulated with regard to profits which it was alleged he had made from the sale of his own small estate under the Wyndham Act. But as regards the question of general policy he was not wholly in agreement with either combatant. Unlike Mr. Dillon, he thought that the reforming landlords deserved much encouragement. On the other hand, it did not seem to him that the whole course of Nationalist policy should be altered to suit the con-



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JOHN REDMOND FISHING IN COUNTY WICKLOW





venience of Lord Dunraven and his friends, who were after all but a small group within the Unionist Party and of doubtful influence.

He wisely elected to pursue a cautious course. He kept in close touch with William O'Brien, but at the same time refused to pass a sentence of excommunication upon Mr. O'Brien's critics. He would not deny to Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt a right to their private opinions, or even to propaganda in the interest of their particular views of the Land Act. Such action on his part would have precipitated a split in the Nationalist movement; and he could not but remember how as Parnellite leader he had insisted on the rights of minorities. Mr. O'Brien's demands were insistent; he refused them, and an amicable parting followed. Mr. O'Brien withdrew from the political scene. The two men separated on 'terms of undiminished personal cordiality.' Henceforth Mr. Dillon was Mr. Redmond's principal adviser, which is not to say that the leader did not act on many occasions on his own initiative.

Meanwhile events in England tended to discredit Mr. William O'Brien's idea of Irish co-operation with the Conservatives. It was evident that disasters were in store for Mr. Balfour's Government, and that the English electors only awaited an opportunity of turning it out of office. There was talk in Conservative circles of a settlement of the University question; Mr. Redmond refused to be impressed. When Parliament met in 1904 he spoke very strongly, and in April of the same year he foretold the coming collapse of Mr. Balfour, adding that 'in all human probability it is reserved for the representatives of

Ireland to give the final blow that will end their existence.'

The Chief-Secretary, Mr. Wyndham, sincerely wished to proceed with a policy of reform, and had even negotiated with Lord Lansdowne and Lord Dunraven on the subject of a devolution to Ireland of a measure of self-government. Mr. Redmond recognised Mr. Wyndham's sincerity, but wisely doubted his strength of purpose. What the reforming landlords and he proposed was not clear; some said merely 'a co-ordination of Castle Boards,' others foresaw an important step in the direction of national government. Mr. Redmond, who was lecturing in America, was for a time inclined to interpret the early activities of the Land Reform Association in a very favourable sense. 'Home Rule may come at any moment,' he declared.

He was to learn the truth on his return home, when Mr. Wyndham, in face of Orange attacks, repudiated all sympathy with the idea of a 'statutory legislative assembly,' which was one of the items of Lord Dunraven's programme. But even with that surrender the Orangemen were not content; nothing would satisfy them but that the Government should force Mr. Wyndham to resign, and appoint in his stead a representative of unbending Unionism, Mr. Walter Long. Mr. Long was Chief-Secretary during the remainder of the Government's life, during which time no awkward problems of policy confronted John Redmond. A simple war to the knife prevailed. The chief incident of the last months of Mr. Balfour's Administration was the defeat, effected by Mr. Redmond's mastery of Parliamentary procedure, of an attempt by the



Government to introduce a redistribution scheme, which would have had the result of reducing the Irish representation by nearly forty members. The final collapse of the Tory Government justified Mr. Redmond's prediction that the Irish Party would give it the *coup de grâce*.

## CHAPTER V

### TOWARDS HOME RULE

THE years 1906 to 1910 embraced the period which established Mr. Redmond's reputation as a political strategist of the first order. I use the expression 'political strategist' in no offensive sense. In his case it bore none of that connotation of underhand intrigue which has done so much to bring British political life into public disrepute. A certain amount of 'wire-pulling' and manipulation is, perhaps, in the modern democracy inseparable from the position of a party leader, and not least of an Irish Party leader. But this aspect of politics, though he did not neglect it when it was necessary to engage in it, was temperamentally distasteful to Mr. Redmond and altogether alien from his true political genius. For him politics were not the happy hunting-ground of the self-seeking intriguer, but the highest form of public service to which a man's talents could be devoted. When I speak of his reputation as a political strategist, I mean nothing less worthy than the consummate skill with which he used his political talents to mould political forces, and seize political opportunities, for the advancement of those Irish interests in whose service he spent his life.

The period following the return of the Liberal Party to power put those talents to a very severe

test. Mr. Redmond's *rôle* while the Conservative Party, from which he could expect only minor concessions, was in office, was relatively easy; his *rôle* after the return of a Liberal Administration from which he might hope to secure the realisation of all his political hopes was, paradoxically, very much more difficult. His difficulties began even before the General Election which followed the resignation in December 1905, of the Conservative Government, for whose defeat—finally brought about over the question of the administration of the Irish Land Act—Mr. Redmond's party was largely responsible. The British electorate was scarcely yet educated into acceptance of the principle of Home Rule: the memory of the Boer War, and of the attitude which the Irish Parliamentary Party had adopted towards it, was not yet far behind.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new Liberal Prime Minister, though himself an unwavering advocate of Home Rule, was obliged, in order to secure the co-operation of certain powerful members of the Liberal League, and as part of the price of healing the differences which had arisen in the party at the time of the Boer War, to agree that, in the event of a Liberal victory at the polls, a Home Rule measure would not be proposed in the new Parliament. This agreement created a position of extreme difficulty for Mr. Redmond and his colleagues, who in the situation thus created advised Irish electors in Great Britain to vote in the first place for Labour candidates, and as between Tory and Liberal to vote for the Liberal. The Irish vote was largely responsible for the return to the new Parliament of some forty Labour members.



Contrary to general expectation, the Liberal Government was returned by a majority so large as to be independent of the Irish vote, and Mr. Redmond was disappointed in his hope of holding the balance of power. Nevertheless his party occupied such a position as enabled him to extract important concessions from a Government more or less sympathetic towards Ireland. In the first session of the new Parliament the Evicted Tenants Act was passed, which restored to their holdings a very large number of the 'wounded soldiers of the Land War.' In the same session sanction was also obtained for the provision of five millions towards the completion of the housing of Irish agricultural labourers, and this sum was subsequently increased to eight millions.

The main Liberal measure of the new session, the Education Bill, presented Mr. Redmond with another difficulty. The Bill, introduced under pressure of the Radical Nonconformist element, was in many respects repugnant to Roman Catholic feeling. He was able to secure the concessions which were considered necessary to safeguard the religious atmosphere in the schools, and was publicly thanked for his services by Cardinal Bourne and the English Hierarchy. Mr. Redmond, however, who during the Parnellite split had repeatedly insisted that the prevalence of clerical influence was killing Home Rule in English public opinion, had necessarily to walk warily in this matter, and secured the desired concessions with infinite tact.

It will be convenient to take account here, before we proceed to follow Mr. Redmond's part in the development of the Home Rule struggle, of his

connection with the two chief Irish measures of the Parliament of 1906-1910—the Irish University Act and the Irish Land Purchase Act of 1909. For many years an agitation had been conducted for the establishment of a University with a ‘Catholic atmosphere,’ in order to meet the grievance of young Irish Catholics who were debarred from University education elsewhere than at Trinity College, which, though it opened its doors to Catholics (Mr. Redmond himself studied there), was a Protestant foundation. Successive schemes had been prepared and had fallen through, until finally in 1908 the Government, under Mr. Redmond’s continual urging of the importance of the question from the point of view of ‘the brain value of the nation,’ introduced the Irish University Bill. This measure created two new Universities—one the federal National University, consisting of the Cork and Galway Colleges of the old Royal University (merely an examining body) and a new college in Dublin, and the other in Belfast, thus satisfying simultaneously the grievances of both Catholics and Presbyterians. The governing bodies were made elective, no religious tests were imposed, and powers of affiliation were conferred so as to include Maynooth. This final establishment for the Catholic people of Ireland of what he himself described as a great democratic and national University ranks highest, perhaps, after the enactment of Home Rule among his political triumphs.

Mr. Redmond greatly resented the suggestion that the establishment of the new Universities, distinctively Catholic and Presbyterian respectively, was calculated to perpetuate religious differences.

That certainly was not his intention in pressing the Irish Catholic claim for suitable University education. He was concerned merely with the practical grievance of a Catholic being deprived of University teaching because of what he regarded as the danger to his faith. Whether he so regarded it himself (a moot question, since, although he was himself educated at Trinity College, he refused to send his son there) was altogether beside the point. He approached the question, in fact, not as a political Catholic, but merely as a Catholic politician.

One may appropriately quote here his own earlier assertion of the Irish national movement's independence of all religious creeds. 'I say the National movement is not a Catholic movement. It is not in conflict with the interests of the Catholic religion ; God forbid !—that is the religion of the overwhelming majority of our people. But the National movement is a movement embracing within its fold men of all religions, and those who seek to turn the Nationalist movement into a Catholic movement would be repudiating some of the highest pages of our national history and forgetting the memory of some of the greatest of our national heroes who professed the newer and the older creed of our country.'

The Irish Land Act of 1909—commonly known as the 'Birrell Act'—the other chief Irish measure of the session, was introduced at Mr. Redmond's instance to deal with the slowness of the transfer, caused by a provision of the Wyndham Act of 1903 limiting the issue of Irish Land Stock to five million pounds yearly. The new Act did not go so far as Mr. Redmond would have wished ; it extended the



principle of compulsory sale only to nine counties instead of to the whole country ; but its modifications and additions to the Wyndham Act brought much nearer to completion the programme laid down by the Land Conference of 1903, in which he had played a leading part in bringing about the peaceful agrarian revolution in Ireland.

We may now resume our study of Mr. Redmond's part in the final struggle for Home Rule. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new Liberal Prime Minister, as we have seen, had been compelled to agree before the General Election that, in the event of a Liberal victory at the polls, a Home Rule measure would not be proposed in the new Parliament. This agreement, however, did not exclude dealing with the alternative scheme which had come to be known as 'devolution.' Sir Antony MacDonnell's scheme of administrative Home Rule, brought forward under the late Administration and then killed by the opposition of the Orangemen and the more extreme Tories, still lingered 'in the air'; and it was soon apparent that the Liberal Government proposed to attempt a new move in this direction. The Chief-Secretary, Mr. Bryce, was appointed to the post of British Ambassador to the United States, and it was rumoured that Mr. Redmond himself was offered the vacant position. Mr. Birrell, the new Chief-Secretary, a close friend of Mr. Redmond, was generally understood to be the Irish leader's nominee. 'There are two men,' wrote Mr. Stead at the beginning of 1907, 'whose opinion on the matter would be worth having, Mr. Redmond and Sir Antony MacDonnell. The new Chief-Secretary, whoever he may be, ought to regard himself as Mr.

Redmond's man. Mr. Redmond himself ought to be Chief-Secretary, but as he is precluded from taking the post the Cabinet ought to accept Mr. Redmond's nominee, and the new Chief-Secretary ought to do what Mr. Redmond tells him. For Mr. Redmond, if Home Rule were granted, would be Prime Minister of Ireland.'

In these circumstances it was generally assumed that Mr. Redmond was privy to the drafting of the scheme of devolution introduced by Mr. Birrell in May 1907, under the title of the Irish Councils Bill. Mr. Redmond, however, earlier in the year had declared that he could only look upon a scheme of administrative Home Rule as a makeshift; had undertaken only that when the Government's proposals were drafted they should be submitted to a Nationalist Convention; and had warned the Government of the danger of half measures. The Irish Councils Bill upon its introduction was found merely to propose a co-ordination of the chief Castle Boards under a popular council, which was to be partly elective and partly nominated, and was to have certain limited powers of controlling finance and administration.

Mr. Redmond's attitude towards the Bill from first to last is best expressed in a series of quotations from his own speeches. In his speech on its introduction he neither praised nor blamed it, accepted or rejected it. He said that he had never addressed the House under a heavier sense of responsibility; that no one in his position could take upon himself the onus of refusing any measure, however small, that would remove even one Irish grievance; and that the Bill must await the decision of the National

Convention. When the Convention assembled the scheme was in fact unanimously rejected on his own motion. It was charged against Mr. Redmond by some of his own friends that upon this question he 'led his party from behind.' The charge scarcely seems to be substantiated in the light of his own speeches. Six months before the introduction of the Bill he had said that 'when the hour of that Convention comes, any influence which I possess with my fellow-countrymen will be used to induce them to reject any proposal, no matter how plausible, which in my judgment may be calculated to injure the prestige of the Irish Party, and disrupt the national movement, because my first and my greatest policy, which overshadows everything else, is to preserve a united National party in Parliament, and a united powerful organisation in Ireland, until we achieve the full measure to which we are entitled.'

It appears that on consideration of the Councils Bill after its introduction he saw in it precisely that element of division which he had declared would lead him to urge its rejection. 'By the constitution of this Council it is extremely doubtful to my mind,' he said in his speech at the Convention, 'whether the real feeling of the overwhelming mass of the Irish people would be truly reflected in a workable majority on the Council, and there would be the greatest possible danger that the Council would constitute a sort of rival body to the Irish Nationalist Party, which, as I have said, I believe to be the greatest weapon, with an organised country behind it, which Ireland has in her possession.'

In the September after the rejection of the Bill by the Nationalist Convention, Mr. Redmond declared



that 'its production and its fate will prove, in my opinion, probably a blessing in disguise. Certainly the fate of that great measure has shown the Government the impossibility of satisfying Ireland with anything short of real Home Rule, and it has also made this certain, that Home Rule and not Devolution will be the Irish policy put before the electors at the next General Election. If that Bill had been accepted here as an instalment, and if it had passed, as it would have passed, the House of Commons, it most undoubtedly would have been rejected by the House of Lords, and then it—that is, the Irish Councils Bill—would have definitely passed into the programme of the Liberal Party as their Irish policy, whereas now, after what has happened, Home Rule, and whole Home Rule, must be the policy of the Liberal Party before the next General Election.'

That prediction was justified by the event; but Mr. Redmond's action in connection with the Bill was the subject of much criticism in Ireland. There were those, on the one hand, who complained that the immediate rejection of the Bill was bad policy, and would have preferred a less uncompromising attitude. There were those, on the other hand, who charged Mr. Redmond with having been ready to accept the Bill but for the unmistakable manifestations of hostility towards it, and denounced him for his weakness. Even in his own party it produced no little dissension and even some secessions. From this period dates the definite cleavage of the new party of 'conciliators' which at the next General Election was to be returned, to the strength of eight members, under the leadership of Mr. William

O'Brien—the All-for-Ireland group. For the moment, however, differences were healed, and at the beginning of the session of 1908 Mr. Redmond had the satisfaction of seeing carried by a large majority in the House of Commons his amendment to the Address to the Throne reaffirming the principle of Home Rule. In the same year he and his party played a prominent part in carrying the Old Age Pensions Act, by which a sum of two and a half millions *per annum* was distributed among the aged poor of Ireland.

In 1909 the introduction of Mr. Lloyd George's famous Budget marked the beginning of the final phase in the struggle against the Lords which ended in the destruction of the absolute veto of that chamber over democratic legislation and paved the way to the passing of the Home Rule Act. The influence of Mr. Redmond dominated all this chapter of British political history. The Budget of 1909 in many respects—notably in its dealings with land and liquor—hit Irish interests somewhat severely. Mr. Redmond, foreseeing that a greater issue than that of the Budget itself was destined to arise from it, in the main supported the Bill, but at the same time made it clear that in its final stages the Government must reckon with his party's opposition unless material concessions were made to the Irish interests affected. The Government, after a considerable period of hesitation, substantially conceded Mr. Redmond's demands. The further question remained, however, what attitude the Irish Party should adopt in the crisis which was now clearly approaching. It was apparent that the Lords were about to reject the Budget, and that a

great constitutional issue would arise in which the interests of British democracy would be involved in a degree which had not been known since the great Reform Bill of '32.

This was an issue on which the Nationalist Party could scarcely afford to take risks of alienating the Liberal and Labour Parties. 'The issue,' as Mr. Redmond said later at Manchester, 'is Home Rule for England.' But at the same time his first objective was an assurance that a popular victory would be a victory for Irish democracy as well as for British democracy. It was eventually decided by the Nationalist Party to let the Budget pass the House of Commons, in the expectation that the Lords would make good their threat of rejection and precipitate a great constitutional struggle. This expectation was duly realised, and, on the Budget being returned to the Commons, Mr. Asquith, who had succeeded to the Premiership on the death of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, moved a resolution protesting against the action of the Lords, and announced that the Government had advised the King to dissolve Parliament. In the division on this resolution, which was carried by a large majority, Mr. Redmond and his colleagues took no part. 'To Liberals,' wrote an English chronicler of the time, 'this aloofness of the Irish members at a critical moment in the last hours of a Parliament that has done much for Ireland was a keen disappointment.'

Mr. Redmond's abstention, of course, was due to the fact that he was still without an assurance that Irish support of the Liberals would pave the way for Home Rule. It was a warning to the Govern-



ment that so far as Mr. Redmond and the Nationalist Party were concerned the limiting of the power of the House of Lords, the standing obstacle to Home Rule, must not leave to the chances of the future the question of Irish self-government. The Irish leader was fully resolved that this great question should be definitely and unmistakably associated with the constitutional issue. Mr. Asquith's succession to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had been looked upon with some suspicion by the Nationalists, and Mr. Redmond was determined that his attitude should not be left in doubt.

The election campaign had not been long in progress when the desired assurance from Mr. Asquith was forthcoming. Speaking at the Albert Hall on December 10, 1909, the Liberal Prime Minister declared that the absolute veto of the House of Lords must go, and that this in itself would mean the removal of the greatest obstacle in the path of the Home Rule cause. He went on to declare that, 'speaking on behalf of the Government, in March of last year, a week before my succession to the office of Prime Minister, I described Ireland as the one unmistakable failure of British statesmanship. I repeat here to-night what I said then, speaking on behalf of my colleagues, and I believe of my party, that the solution of the problem can be found only in one way—by a policy which, while explicitly safeguarding the supremacy and indefeasible authority of the Imperial Parliament, will set up in Ireland a system of full self-government in regard to purely Irish affairs. There is not, and there cannot be, any question of separation; there is not, and there cannot be, any question of rival

or competing supremacies; but, subject to these conditions, that is the Liberal policy.' That declaration, in Mr. T. P. O'Connor's words, sounded the death-knell of Devolution by an open avowal of the full Gladstonian policy, and the position lost by the rejection of the Home Rule Bill of 1893 was regained in 1909.

Despite this vindication of Mr. Redmond's leadership, however, he had in the first General Election of 1910 to face, for the first time since his election as leader of the re-united Irish Parliamentary Party, an organised opposition in the constituencies. Mr. William O'Brien had now definitely seceded, and formed a new party under the name of the All-for-Ireland League; he brought back eight representatives from Munster constituencies to oppose Mr. Redmond under his leadership. Mr. Redmond, in his election speeches, recalled the programme which he had outlined four years earlier to his constituents at Waterford. He had spoken of the Education question; the party had given them a great Irish national democratic University. He had spoken of the Land question; the principle of compulsory purchase had been extended to nine counties and even beyond wherever congestion existed, while the restoration of the evicted tenants, which should have taken place in 1903 had the party had its way, had now been arranged. He recalled also what the party had done for the improvement of housing, urban as well as rural. With regard to the Budget, he showed that the party had succeeded in getting all the agricultural land exempted from the new taxes, and in providing that all the money raised in Ireland on such land as had increased in value

through the action of the community should go to the local authorities in Ireland, and be used in the interests of the working classes. All these things he ventured to lay before the Irish people as the work of four years, and if he were accused of having failed to obtain Home Rule, while he had refused the Irish Councils Bill, it was only, he explained, because if that Bill had not been rejected it would have become, at any rate, for their lifetime, the high-water mark of Liberal effort.

The election campaign was remarkable for an exceedingly bitter personal conflict between Mr. Redmond and Mr. T. M. Healy, sustained on Mr. Redmond's side, in the face of violent attacks, with much dignity. 'Public life in the country,' he said, 'is hard owing to such attacks as these, and it is bitter meed to be subjected to attacks of this kind. My power for good has been small; my abilities are limited. God knows there is no one more conscious of his own shortcomings than I am of mine, but I know that my motives have been honest and sound. I know I have given my best to the service of the people of Ireland. When you are tired of me, when my colleagues in the House of Commons are tired of me, I am quite ready to-morrow to step down and out, and when that day comes I will humbly and loyally do my best to support those who may take my place. But never so long as I live will I allow myself to be driven out by calumny and abuse.'

'The position to which I was elected,' said Mr. Redmond again, 'was one of great difficulty at any time, but at the time I was put into it the difficulties were enormous and unprecedented. So far as the



Parnell split is concerned, I think I have succeeded. I have endeavoured to be patient under unjust and ungenerous criticism. I have endeavoured to extend toleration to every man. I did not hesitate to risk my position and my popularity with my countrymen and my colleagues in order to avoid the necessity of extreme action against men who were mutineers.' The General Election, as has been stated, reduced the strength of Mr. Redmond's party by eight through the secession of the All-for-Ireland group. The success of this secession was influenced indirectly by the *Sinn Féin* movement, whose bearing upon Mr. Redmond's political fortunes is considered at length in a later chapter.

In Great Britain the Irish vote was thrown on the side of the Liberal and Labour candidates, and contributed largely to the Coalition majority of 124. Mr. Redmond took an energetic part in the election campaign in Great Britain as well as in Ireland. In his speeches he identified the cause of the British and Irish democracies, asserting the truth of Lecky's contention, that no single element in the House of Commons has been more fruitful in influencing the progress of English democracy than the Irish Party. He maintained in a speech at Manchester to a largely Irish audience that the House of Lords alone—not the people of England—were really hostile to Irish self-government, and that the abolition or the limitation of the veto of the Lords meant Home Rule for Ireland. It was hardly to be expected that the English people should fight the Lords entirely upon the Irish question—thus shelving all British questions for several sessions—but once the constitutional struggle had begun there was hardly

anything more important than that Ireland should take her part.

Proceeding to deal with the cry of separation, he declared that, 'to talk about Ireland separating from the Empire is the most utter nonsense. We are not asking for separation. I say to the English democracy, in all seriousness, what we want is peace between the two countries. We have none of these heroic ambitions and hare-brained ideas. Our ideas and our ambitions are humbler. We simply want the people to turn the energies and abilities which are to-day dissipated in this horrible racial conflict between England and Ireland to the prosaic work of advancing the material and moral and educational elevation of our own people at home. We know that it cannot be done by outsiders. The whole history of the Empire shows the same in every part of the world. We simply ask for permission quietly to attend to our own business in our own way.'

The result of the election left the balance of power in the new Parliament in Mr. Redmond's hands, and immediate occasion arose for his use of this dominating position. Mr. Asquith's declarations during the election campaign had been very generally interpreted as meaning that he had obtained guarantees from the King for the ending of the Lords' veto, and that he would proceed at once to deal with the question. In his opening speech of the session, on February 21, 1910, however, the Prime Minister announced that not only had he no such guarantees, but that in his opinion it would have been improper and unconstitutional for him to ask for them; and he indicated that the Government was contemplating rather a reform of the House of Lords than a limita-

tion of its veto. For the Nationalist Party the destruction of the veto was, of course, all important, and Mr. Redmond lost no time in bringing the situation under his control. Speaking at a banquet given to him and his colleagues at the Gresham Hotel, in Dublin, by the Lord Mayor some ten days before the meeting of Parliament and Mr. Asquith's announcement, but when the Government's intention to put reform of the Lords before the veto was already known, Mr. Redmond asked, so far as Ireland was concerned, for a free hand and for security from any danger of being stabbed in the back. Then he bluntly declared that, unless the Government was prepared to proceed at once with the limitation of the Lords' veto, he and his party would refuse to pass the Budget.

This blunt declaration at once transformed the political situation. The Radical wing of the Liberals and the Labour Party, who had been disappointed and indignant at the Government's attitude towards the Lords, but had lacked a strong spokesman, at once rallied behind Mr. Redmond and took up with enthusiasm his slogan of 'No Veto, No Budget.' On the meeting of Parliament and Mr. Asquith's announcement, Mr. Redmond personally served notice on the Government that, unless it was prepared to alter its policy, it would not have the support of the Irish Party in passing the Budget. The debate was immediately adjourned, and a political crisis of three weeks' duration followed.

Finally the Government capitulated to Mr. Redmond. Sir Edward Grey and the other Ministers who had favoured the policy of reform for the House of Lords had in the meantime come to see that the



only alternative to accepting his demand, in view of the Radical and Labour support of his attitude, was the complete disaster of the Coalition. On March 29th, accordingly, Mr. Asquith announced that the Government would at once take up the question of the veto, and leave the question of the reform of the Lords over to another session. The Parliament Bill was published a few days later, and was carried through the House of Commons on April 14th. Not until then did Mr. Redmond agree to pass the Budget. The Parliament Bill limiting the Lords' veto was passed by the House of Commons after a very bitter debate, in which the Unionist Party violently denounced Mr. Redmond's share in the transaction.

Mr. Harry Jones, the Parliamentary journalist, thus described Mr. Redmond's part in this chapter of political history. 'It happened that the Nationalists held the keys of the situation. The 1909 Budget, rejected by the Lords, had not yet been passed into law. It had to be reintroduced into the House of Commons, and it could not go through that House without the concurrence of the Nationalist members. "No Veto, No Budget," was the policy of the Nationalist leader. This became crystallised into a policy expressing Liberal no less than Nationalist conviction. Through these early troubled weeks of the new Parliament Mr. John Redmond played a statesmanlike rôle. Amid the shifting sands of doubt and uncertainty he stood firm as a rock, and became the rallying-point for Liberal opinion in and out of Parliament. Mr. Redmond's post-bag in these days was heavy with letters from leading Liberals in all parts of the

country expressing grateful appreciation of his steadfast attitude. There can be no doubt that the Nationalist leader was a powerful factor in modifying the tactics of the Cabinet, and in assisting the concentration of the whole Liberal army on the limitation of the Lords' veto.<sup>1</sup>

From this point Mr. Redmond became the target of furious attacks in the Tory Press, which represented the Veto campaign as being engineered for the purpose of carrying Home Rule—which was, of course, the case so far as Mr. Redmond and his party were concerned. The progress of the constitutional struggle was soon interrupted by the unexpected death of King Edward on May 6th. One of the first acts of his successor was the summoning of a conference of party leaders with the object of finding an agreed solution on the position of the House of Lords with a view to avoiding, if possible, the creation of new peers. The summoning of the conference coincided with a plea for a compromise on the Irish question put forward in certain sections of the English Press, notably by *The Observer* and *The Times*, and it was clear that the constitutional question and the Irish question remained inseparable. The expedient of a conference was not liked by the Nationalists, but they were to some extent reassured by the inclusion of Mr. Birrell among the Liberal representatives. The conference, after a lengthy session, finally broke up without achieving any result, and it was commonly understood that the Irish question—which was, of course, closely involved in the question of constitutional reform—was a prime cause of its failure. Mr. Redmond in

<sup>1</sup> *Liberalism and the House of Lords.*

the meantime had taken advantage of the suspension of the controversy to pay a visit to the United States, where in the autumn he attended a Convention of the United Irish League of America in Chicago, and had an enthusiastic reception from the Irish-Americans.

Almost simultaneously with his return it was announced, on November 10th, that the conference had failed to come to an agreement. A week later, when it had become evident that the House of Lords had no intention of passing the Veto Bill, Mr. Asquith announced that Parliament would again be dissolved without delay. In the debate following this announcement, which was received with very modified enthusiasm by the Government's supporters, Mr. Redmond took no part. Mr. Jones, from whom I have quoted above, thus describes the incident: 'All through the long debate Mr. Redmond (who had only returned from his American tour a few days before) sat silent in his corner seat. Two dissident Irishmen, Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. Timothy Healy, did their utmost to make the Irish leader speak, but to no purpose. When the member for Cork said that "the 'dictator of England' was the 'destroyer of Ireland,'" a smile overspread Mr. Redmond's Roman features. Mr. Healy spoke like a statesman when he appealed to both political parties to use the present blessed opportunity for a national settlement of the Irish question. But the statesman was swallowed up by the partisan when he began to fling his darts at the Nationalist leader. Calm and imperturbed, Mr. Redmond listened to his caustic critic. In spite of provocation and misrepresentation, still he held his tongue. It



is a great art to know when to be silent. Mr. Redmond's silence through all this long debate was more eloquent than words.'

Mr. Redmond's silence, of course, was due to the absence of assurances from the Government as to its attitude in the event of its success in this second General Election of 1910. He was still determined that Irish support of the Government should be conditional upon the question of Ireland being taken up immediately the veto of the Lords was destroyed. The required assurances, however, were soon forthcoming, and again the Irish voters in Great Britain were mobilised in support of the Government. In the Tory Press and on Tory platforms during the election, Mr. Redmond was now more than ever the target of abuse. At this period there was coined for his benefit the *sobriquet* of 'the Dollar Dictator,' in reference to his American tour; he was denounced as being returned from the United States with his pockets filled with foreign gold to dominate British politics. The election, decided as much on the Home Rule issue as on that of the veto, after perhaps the most violent campaign in British political history, resulted in a slightly increased majority for the Government—126 as against 124 in January. The balance of power was still in Mr. Redmond's hands.

A fortnight after the meeting of the new Parliament on February 6, 1911, the Parliament Bill limiting the Lords' veto was introduced. It was finally passed through the House of Commons in the following May, and was accepted by the House of Lords after a statement by Lord Morley that if it were defeated the King would assent to the creation

of enough new peers to carry it at its next presentation. 'If Mr. Redmond,' said the writer of his obituary in the *Freeman's Journal* in summing up the veto struggle, 'had no other claim to greatness or the gratitude of his countrymen than the part which he played in this gigantic struggle, he would be entitled to be regarded for all time as one of the greatest of our national leaders. For unquestionably it was due to him more than to any other man that the formidable power of the Lords was broken for ever.' The claim cannot be regarded as excessive.

Mr. Redmond's use of his victory, however, was the subject of no little criticism in Ireland. With the Parliament Bill passed and the power of the Lords broken, the road was at last clear for the introduction of the Home Rule Bill. During the remaining months of 1911 Parliament, instead, devoted most of its time and attention to Mr. Lloyd George's Insurance Bill. Mr. Redmond's critics in Ireland, besides objecting to the postponement of the Home Rule Bill, opposed the Insurance Bill itself, which was certainly not very popular in Ireland. It was warmly supported, however, by one of his chief lieutenants, Mr. Devlin, whose special organisation, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a political and sectarian 'friendly society,' stood to gain greatly in power from the Insurance Bill.

Mr. Redmond was not very active in political life during the year 1911. He was suffering, perhaps, from a certain reaction after the strain of the past few years, and reserving his energies for the coming Home Rule struggle. In October he received a tremendous ovation in Dublin on unveiling the

Parnell Monument. It may be remarked in passing that the fact that the monument bore on its base Parnell's somewhat trite remark that 'no man could fix boundaries to the march of a nation' drew upon Mr. Redmond new charges of being a 'separatist.' His own words, however, stood on record. 'Separation,' he had said, 'is impossible; and, if it were not impossible, it is undesirable.'

One of his few public utterances in Ireland in 1911 was made at Baltinglass on October 23rd. Here he told his audience that the Home Rule Bill was almost completed, and that in its principles and details it would be a Bill satisfactory to Ireland. A short time after this meeting he met with a somewhat serious car accident near his home at Aughavanagh, and his health was impaired for some time. His first public reappearance was at Mr. Churchill's meeting in Belfast in February 1912, to which reference is made in the next chapter. In the following April, immediately before the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, he addressed in O'Connell Street one of the greatest Nationalist demonstrations that ever assembled in Dublin: over 100,000 people, it was estimated, were present. Mr. Redmond then announced that the Bill would be 'a great and adequate one,' and added the prophecy that 'We will have a Parliament sitting in College Green sooner than the most sanguine and enthusiastic man in the crowd believes.' Rarely did a political prophecy appear better founded; rarely was the fulfilment of such a prophecy more completely frustrated by unforeseen events than the fulfilment of this prophecy of Mr. Redmond's was destined to be.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE HOME RULE BILL

**T**HE third Home Rule Bill was introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Asquith on April 11, 1912. In his introductory speech the Prime Minister said that he had always presented the case for Irish Home Rule as the first step to a larger and more comprehensive scheme of local self-government, and recommended the Bill as being framed with that end in view.

Mr. Redmond's speech on the introduction of this Bill is interesting as defining his position in regard to several points in connection with the Anglo-Irish controversy. Dealing with the question of separation, he admitted that there had always been a certain section of Irishmen who would like to see separation from England, but dismissed them as a small section who would soon disappear when Irishmen were given the management of their own affairs. 'Mr. Parnell,' he proceeded, 'speaking in 1886, said he specifically accepted as final the settlement of the Irish demand for a Statutory Parliament for Ireland. I say that Mr. Parnell was never a separatist, and that we stand in this matter precisely where Parnell stood. We want peace for our country, and I say that Ireland is willing to accept a Statutory Parliament created by statute of this Imperial Parliament as a final settlement.'

In the matter of religious safeguards he stated his position in a sentence: 'Put into the Bill whatever safeguards you like.' Coming to the question of finance, he traversed the Tory argument that England was being asked to pay for giving Ireland the privilege of managing her own affairs, and declared that in any case, 'it is an utterly unworthy point of view for the rich country to take, when we are considering a great question of this kind, to haggle about the terms. If Home Rule is unjust and wrong, refuse it. If it is just and right, what consistent argument can you make founded upon a few paltry pounds, shillings, and pence?' From the Irish point of view he expressed the opinion that, on the question of finance, this was a far better Bill than either that of 1886 or that of 1893.

His reference to the reduction of the Irish membership at Westminster was especially interesting; it was amplified in his speech to the National Convention a fortnight later, to which I shall refer in a moment. On this question, he said, he had a perfectly consistent record. 'When under the Home Rule Bill of 1886 the proposal was made to exclude all Irish representation I agreed to it with great reluctance, and I looked forward to the time when Irish representatives would be called back with the other representatives of the United Kingdom in what would then be a real Imperial Parliament. The point I want to make is this—that until the system is completed you must have a certain amount of abnormality in your proceedings here; but the best way to meet any anomaly has, in my opinion, been undoubtedly taken by the Government in having a reduced number of Irish representatives in the

House. For my part you might have reduced them more. . . . We also desire that we should be here under such conditions that it would be impossible for us to govern the decision on Scotch, Welsh, and English Bills. We are only brought here because it is necessary that this symbol of Imperial unity shall be maintained.'

The concluding passage of Mr. Redmond's speech may be quoted at length.

'Viewing this Bill as a whole I say—and I speak for my colleagues on these benches—this is a great measure, and a measure adequate to carry out the objects of its promoters. It is a great measure, and we welcome it. This Bill will be submitted to an Irish National Convention, and I shall, without hesitation, recommend to the Convention the acceptance of this Bill. If I may say so reverently, I personally thank God that I have lived to see this day. I believe this Bill will pass into law. I believe it will result in the greater unity and strength of the Empire. I believe it will put an end, once and for all, to the wretched ill-will, suspicion, and dissatisfaction that have existed in Ireland, and the suspicion and misunderstanding that have existed in this country with regard to Ireland. I believe it will have the effect of turning Ireland in time into a happy and prosperous country, with a united and contented people.

'I well remember the introduction of the Home Rule Bill of 1886. To-night another Prime Minister extends the hand of friendship to Ireland under much happier auspices. Ireland to-day is peaceable beyond record. She has almost entirely cast aside her suspicion and rancour towards this country, and England, I believe, to-day is more willing than ever before in history to admit Ireland on terms of equality, liberty, and loyalty into the great community of nations which make the great Empire. From the great men of every self-governing colony of the Empire have come mes-



sages all in favour of Home Rule, blessing this Bill, and giving encouragement to the right hon. gentleman who introduced it. I pray earnestly that the Bill may pass, and that it may achieve the objects its promoters have in view, and that, in the beautiful words of the prayer with which the proceedings of the House are opened every afternoon: "The result of all our councils may be the maintenance of true religion and justice, the safety, honour, and happiness of the King, the public health, peace, and tranquillity of the realm, and the unity and knitting together therein of the hearts of all persons and estates, the same in true Christian love and charity."

The National Convention to consider the Bill was held in the Dublin Mansion House on April 23rd. In his speech to that assembly Mr. Redmond fully made good his promise in the House of Commons that he would without hesitation recommend the acceptance of the Bill. He began his speech with the assertion that the introduction of a Bill of the character of the Home Rule Bill was a complete vindication and justification of the policy which the Irish Party had pursued for three years in the face of unparalleled difficulties, and of much discouragement and even attack in Ireland. The Home Rule Bill, he declared, was the greatest and the most satisfactory measure of Home Rule Bill ever offered to the country. It was something far more valuable to Ireland than repeal of the Union; for Grattan's Parliament was independent only in theory, but was dependent and impotent in practice, with its measures subject to the veto of the King and Council in England, and its Executive responsible not to the Parliament of Ireland, but to the Parliament of England. Under the Home Rule Bill, on the other

hand, Ireland would have for the first time an Executive Government dependent on the confidence of the Irish Parliament, which would have control, subject to a few exceptions, of every purely Irish affair. 'Now,' said Mr. Redmond, 'mark the first result of that. Dublin Castle, with all its evil, blood-stained traditions, disappears—that horrible system of anti-Irish, unrepresentative, centralised bureaucracy, which has misgoverned and tortured and ruined Ireland, crumbles instantly into dust, and the new Irish Executive will control every Irish board and every Irish department.'

The 'reserved services' under the Bill Mr. Redmond divided into two categories. In the first of these he comprised 'things which I say here to-day we never asked for and do not want'—the Army and Navy, foreign relations, coinage, and so forth. Under this heading he included also the reservation with regard to religious ascendancy. These safeguards, he declared, were unnecessary; but, 'though I believed them unnecessary, and though in a sense they are humiliating to our national pride, still, so long as there were a dozen men of our race and kin who entertained honest fears on these subjects, I would be willing to put any conceivable safeguard in the Bill to lull their suspicions to rest.'

With regard to the second category of 'reserved services,' he pointed out that all of them that Ireland cared about would come with automatic precision under the control of Ireland within a comparatively short number of years. He thought that the reservation of the Savings Bank for a certain number of years would be useful in order to prevent a plot

being set on foot to damage Irish credit and damage the Irish Government. Similarly he approved the reservation of land purchase on the ground that it was only reasonable that while the system of land purchase was being carried out by Imperial credit, the Imperial authority should insist on fully safeguarding the security for the loans ; anything else, in fact, would bring land purchase, which he desired to see rapidly completed, to an absolute deadlock.

Replying to objections taken in some quarters to the nominated Senate, he repeated his personal conviction, from his reading of the history of the world, and especially the history of the Colonies, that a nominated Senate was a more democratic body than a Senate elected on a narrow franchise, provided always that three conditions were fulfilled—that the nomination should be for a short number of years, that a large proportion of the senators should go out of office every two or three years, and that there should be a satisfactory provision as to a deadlock between the two Houses. All these three conditions were fulfilled in the Home Rule Bill. He added another reason why he was in favour of a nominated Senate. This was that he wanted the Irish Second Chamber from the very start to be crowded with men who had not been partisans of the National Party in the past at all—men of business, men of commerce, men representing the professions, the arts and sciences and literature, of Ireland, men having large stakes in the country. ‘I doubt,’ said Mr. Redmond, ‘if they would be elected at the start, and I want to see them at the start.’

On the subject of the financial clauses of the Bill



he was emphatic. 'I stand here,' he said, 'to support and vindicate the financial clauses of the Bill. I say they need no apology from any one. I say they constitute a good scheme, a far better one than the scheme in the Bill of 1886 or the Bill of 1893.' Under it, he claimed, every penny of Irish taxation, no matter from what source, would be expended on the government of Ireland; and in addition England had to provide a large annual sum out of Imperial sources for an indefinite number of years. This period, he hoped, would be short, because 'we want to pay our own way in this country, and it is humiliating to our national pride to receive any subsidy, even at the commencement, from England. We want to stand on our own legs; hence it is that I rejoice that this Bill provides machinery whereby, when through the increasing prosperity of Ireland the deficit disappears, Ireland will enter into an arrangement to pay her fair proportion of Imperial expenses, and we shall get absolute control of the collection of our taxes.' The only thing Ireland had not got, he declared, was the general power of protection against England and the world, and he did not know that Ireland wanted anything of the kind. His own personal view was that such a power would be valueless to Ireland; in any case such a power clearly could not be got from a Free Trade Government and Parliament.

With regard to the reduction of the Irish membership at Westminster, Mr. Redmond assumed that most of his audience would be glad to see no members in the Imperial Parliament at all, so that Ireland could be concentrated entirely on the Irish Parliament and Irish affairs. He admitted frankly that

he was himself one of those who desired to continue to share in the governing of the Empire, which Irishmen had taken a large share in building. He took the view, however, that the Irish members must not remain in the Imperial Parliament in such large numbers as to constitute a constant temptation for the discussion there of Irish affairs. On the other hand, he pointed out that the Bill provided that when the Irish deficit disappeared, and the new financial arrangement was to be made, the Irish members were to go back to the Imperial Parliament in their full numbers in order to decide upon that agreement.

The Bill, he repeated at the end of his speech as he had said at the beginning, was a great Bill ; and as to the question of its amendment he claimed that the men on whose shoulders the Irish people had cast the responsibility of passing the measure into law and safeguarding it through the future must have the power of deciding for themselves, on the ground and in accordance with the exigencies of the situation, all such matters of policy and tactics. Finally he declared : ‘ I say to you that it is your duty to accept this Bill, not with grudging or lukewarmness, but with alacrity and enthusiasm,’ and moved a resolution accepting it. This resolution was passed unanimously and with enthusiasm. A further resolution, ‘ recognising that the satisfactory character of the Home Rule Bill is due in large measure to the skill, sagacity, and statesmanship of Mr. Redmond and his Parliamentary colleagues,’ left the question of proposing amendments entirely to his judgment and discretion. The Bill, in fact, was passed without substantial alteration.

The Home Rule Bill was read a second time on May 9th. The concluding portion of Mr. Redmond's speech on this occasion assumes, in retrospect, the character, as it were, of prophecy.

'If I were an Englishman,' he said, 'judging this question solely from the point of view of foreign policy and military strength, I would say that Home Rule for Ireland was the most urgent step you could take for the safeguarding of the country in the future. I contend that the Irish question, as an Imperial and even as a British concern, has grown in magnitude and urgency. Nearly four millions of Irishmen have gone to other countries (since the Union), where they have increased and multiplied and flourished exceedingly. To-day they and their descendants constitute a source of strength to the Irish cause, and a source of potential strength or potential weakness to this Empire. The Irish race have an influence in every English-speaking land in the world, the nature of which is not properly understood by many people in this country. Sir Edward Grey (the Foreign Secretary) summed up the matter in these words: "The goodwill of the Irish race is worth having; it counts for something in every part of the world that you care most for."

'I want to point out this,' Mr. Redmond proceeded in a memorable passage—'that that influence has grown considerably in recent times, and the reason is that the citizens of Irish descent in the United States and in your own self-governing Colonies have advanced immensely in material wealth, in education, and in political intelligence. That influence does not stand alone. Citizens of German birth and descent in the United States—a great community—have lately taken a leaf out of the Irish-American book. They, too, have found that, while becoming thoroughly assimilated with American life and loyal American citizens, a certain separateness and solidarity in a racial sense gives them a power which they would otherwise lack. I ask the



House of Commons seriously to consider, when it comes to American relations with a Power to which German sentiment may be opposed, and from which Irish sentiment remains alienated, the joint influence of these two elements upon public opinion and action as a factor which every thoughtful Imperialist ought to bear in mind. For myself, all I do is to point to your recent experience in treaty-making in America as affording some sidelight on the question. I conclude on this note—that the Irish question is an Imperial one of the first magnitude and urgency, and that if, in making ready for these events which you may have to face in the future, you want to present to the world a spectacle of rare solidarity; if you want to draw your Empire in a single bond of sympathy; above all, if you want to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of that natural community and understanding which should exist between this country and the great English-speaking Republic of America, you have the means of doing it now by passing this Bill into law.’

It is unnecessary to stress the significance of this prophetic utterance of Mr. Redmond’s in the light of after events.

The Home Rule Bill was read a second time in May 1912, and a third time in January 1913. Between those dates occurred a memorable event in the political history of Ireland—the signing of the Ulster Covenant on September 28, 1912. The movement of organised resistance to Home Rule in Ulster which culminated in this event dated from a year before, when the Ulster Unionist Council of four hundred members, representing Unionist associations in Ulster constituencies, met in Belfast and resolved: (1) That it was their imperative duty to make arrangements for a Provisional Government of Ulster; and (2) that they hereby appointed a

commission which, in consultation with Sir Edward Carson, should frame and submit a constitution for this Provisional Government. For a year nothing more was heard of the work of the secret commission, but the state of Unionist feeling in Ulster was sufficiently exhibited when, in February 1912, it was proposed that Mr. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, should address a Home Rule meeting in the Ulster Hall in Belfast. The Harbour Board refused to allow Mr. Churchill a reception as First Lord. The Ulster Hall—a public building—was seized and held for a week by a body of Orangemen, and Mr. Churchill was driven to hold his meeting in a football ground.

Public emotion culminated on 'Ulster Day,' September 28, 1912, when the Covenant, drawn up by a committee of five under Sir Edward Carson, was signed by 218,000 men. The Covenant pledged the signatories to use 'all means that may be found necessary to resist the present conspiracy' of Home Rule. The religious character with which the proceedings were invested struck many observers as impressive, and a special correspondent of the *London Times* applied to them the phrase of an 'offensive and defensive alliance with Divinity.'

Mr. Redmond, in common with the Government and the Liberal Party, refused as yet to take the Ulster movement very seriously. In his public utterances he professed to regard it as a gigantic piece of bluff. It is probable that, himself a convinced constitutionalist, he had some difficulty in believing that the Ulster leaders would translate their threats into action, and certainly that the Tory Party in England—the 'constitutional' party—

would give the movement the open and organised backing without which it could have no hope of success.

In the year 1913, however, the situation changed. On January 31st the Ulster Unionist Council of four hundred announced the passing by them of a notable resolution: 'We ratify and confirm the further steps so far taken by the Special Commission, and approve of the draft resolutions and articles of the Ulster Provisional Government this day submitted to us, and appoint the members of the Special Commission to act as the Executive thereunder.' During the year efforts were made to organise and equip as corps of Volunteers the members of Unionist Clubs which had long been formed throughout the Province. The strength of the Volunteer force during the year was estimated to increase to between 100,000 and 150,000 men. The force was equipped by the Provisional Government, with funds largely provided by English sympathisers, on a sumptuous scale. In December 1913, it was reckoned that between 30,000 and 40,000 rifles and 20,000 pistols had been sent into Ulster during the year.

On September 24th the 'Four Hundred' met in Belfast to decree themselves the Central Authority of the Provisional Government of Ulster, and its Standing Committee of seventy-six was declared to be the Executive Committee of the Provisional Government. Sir Edward Carson was appointed head of the Central Authority, with a number of committees under him representing all the attributes of a self-contained State. The Provisional Government was now ready to be called into full working order at the command of Sir Edward Carson. He



had a little earlier in the year made the significant statement that to his personal knowledge 'the forces of the Crown were already dividing into hostile camps.'

Despite these sinister developments in Ulster, Mr. Redmond still maintained his attitude of reserve and composure. His chief lieutenant, Mr. Devlin, urged the Government to pursue its way undisturbed by menaces from Belfast. The worst that could happen, he calculated, was rioting in Ulster on the day that Home Rule passed into law. On November 25, 1913, however, there emerged an independent Nationalist reply to the Ulster movement. It took the form of a manifesto calling upon Irishmen to 'maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland.' 'A plan had been deliberately adopted by one of the great English political parties, advocated by the leaders of that party, and by its numerous organs in the Press, and brought systematically to bear on English public opinion, to make the display of military force and the menace of armed violence the determining factor in the future relations between this country and Great Britain.' Therefore, if Irishmen 'fail to take such measures as may effectually reject this policy, we become politically the worst degraded population in Europe, and no longer worthy of the name of nation.' (Provocation had just been offered even to the most pacific of Nationalists by speeches like that of Lord Birkenhead, then Mr. F. E. Smith, comparing Nationalists with Covenanters, and asking with a sneer 'were the former willing to fight for Home Rule?') Such, proceeded the Nationalist manifesto, was the occasion, 'not altogether unfortunate,'

which had brought about the inception of the Irish Volunteer movement. 'But the Volunteers, once they have been enrolled, will form a permanent element in the national life under a National Government.'

The Irish Volunteer movement was started—it is a significant fact—quite independently of Mr. Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party. Its promoters, however, were not in the main ill-disposed towards his party or his policy. The promoters of the inaugural meeting of the Volunteers in Dublin were Mr. John MacNeill, Professor of Old Irish History at the National University, and Mr. Lawrence Kettle, a brother of the late Lieutenant T. M. Kettle, a former member of the Irish Party in the House of Commons. Neither Mr. MacNeill nor Mr. Kettle had hitherto taken any prominent part in politics, but both were known as strong Nationalists of the constitutional sort. Colonel Maurice Moore, a brother of Mr. George Moore, the novelist, who had served with distinction in the South African war, put his military experience at the disposal of the new organisation; he was himself a supporter of Mr. Redmond. Some of those, however, who had associated themselves with the foundation of the Volunteers, and notably Sir Roger Casement, were suspect in the eyes of the orthodox Nationalist.

Colonel Moore, in the evidence which he offered to the Royal Commission on the rebellion in 1916, gave an interesting description of the composition of the original committee.

'There were about two extremists, and four or five boys under their domination; these latter men were mild and

quiet, and by no means unreasonable. Five or six *Sinn Féiners* were in a separate group. They might be described as extreme Home Rulers; they did not approve of the methods of the Parliamentary Party, but were not revolutionists. . . . There were a few like MacNeill, Pearse, M'Donagh, Plunkett, and O'Rahilly, who belonged to no special political party; they were idealists. The remainder of the committee were moderate men, inclined to follow the Parliamentary Party. . . . It will be interesting to note how some of the *Sinn Féin* Party and some of the idealists gradually became extremists and merged with the Fenians.'

The attitude of Mr. Redmond towards this new movement was at the outset distinctly unsympathetic. He did not openly oppose it, but neither did he support it, and it was without any encouragement from him that the movement developed. This attitude of Mr. Redmond towards the Volunteers may be attributed to three main reasons. In the first place, and least important, was a certain jealousy natural in the leader of a disciplined party which consistently deprecated independent action in Irish politics. The party had not been consulted with regard to the new departure. In the next place, Mr. Redmond doubtless feared—and events were to justify his fear—that the organisation might develop along extreme lines. Certain passages in the manifesto, such, for instance, as that the occasion of the Volunteer movement (the arming of Protestant Ulster) was 'not altogether unfortunate,' together with the statement that the Volunteers, once they had been enrolled, would form 'a permanent element in the national life under a National Government,' were disquieting. Mr. Redmond had



accepted the Home Rule Bill as a final settlement, and the Bill expressly removed the right of maintaining armed forces from the power of the Irish Parliament.

Finally, and most important of all, Mr. Redmond objected to the Volunteer movement as a strict constitutionalist, both temperamentally and politically. His own natural bent was opposed to extra-constitutional action; moreover, at this time the hopes of the Irish Party were entirely based on the alliance with English Liberalism, and Mr. Redmond therefore wished to act according to the most strict constitutional forms. Here, indeed, seemed to lie the whole moral strength of his and his party's position as against Unionist Ulster and the English Tory Party, which were now definitely committed to a policy of armed threats and conditional rebellion.

Despite the coldness of the Parliamentary Party, the Irish Volunteer movement proved extremely popular. Large numbers of men were enrolled, and drilling became very general throughout the South of Ireland. Mr. Redmond, far too astute a political leader to attempt without strong reason to run counter to popular opinion and refuse to accept the *fait accompli*, rapidly came to the conclusion that, if the movement could not be suppressed, it must in the alternative be controlled. He proposed, therefore, that the Volunteer organisation should be brought into official relations with the political organisation by the co-option to its governing committee of sufficient 'tried and true' Nationalists—that is, recognised supporters of the Parliamentary Party—to command a majority upon it. Twenty-five such substantial men he suggested that he

should nominate himself. He did not carry his point as to the control of the Volunteers without some difficulty. It needed a threat, if his nominations were rejected, to regard the organisation as a body of factionists hostile to the Parliamentary Party to induce the original committee to accept them. Finally Mr. MacNeill and his friends accepted Mr. Redmond's *ultimatum* with what grace they could, and the organisation, now affiliated with the party, worked under the new controlling body fairly harmoniously up to the outbreak of war, with Mr. Redmond as titular President of the Volunteers. He displayed at no time, however, any great interest in the movement.

It is necessary to note here, since it was destined to play a very important part in the development of the situation after the outbreak of war, the growth and existence of a third armed force in Ireland besides the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers. This was the body known as the Irish Citizen Army, whose formation preceded that of the Irish Volunteers and was entirely distinct from them. 'The Irish Citizen Army,' it was stated by James Connolly in his paper, *The Workers' Republic*, in 1915, 'was the first publicly organised armed citizen force south of the Boyne. Its constitution pledged and still pledges its members to work for an Irish Republic, and for the emancipation of labour.'

The year 1908 had marked the entrance of a new factor into Irish Nationalism—Labour under the leadership of James Larkin, who found in the Dublin slums a fertile ground for breeding the propaganda of revolutionary industrialism. Larkin's labour

policy culminated in the great Dublin strike of the winter of 1913, and it was during this stormy episode that the Irish Citizen Army, an armed body of working men, was first formed.

At this time the labour movement was not yet so strongly invested with a Nationalist character that it could claim any support from political Nationalism, and the ordinary lines of industrial division were observed in the strike. The employers' leader—who finally succeeded in breaking the strike at the cost of creating in the Dublin slums a bitterness of discontent which was to contribute powerfully towards the insurrection of 1916—was Mr. W. M. Murphy, formerly a Nationalist member of Parliament, but now, through his newspaper, the *Irish Independent*, one of the bitterest critics of Mr. Redmond's policy.<sup>1</sup> The Ancient Order of Hibernians, a sectarian 'friendly society' organised by Mr. Devlin in the interests of the Parliamentary Party, violently opposed the strike, largely on account of the anti-clericalism attributed to James Larkin.

The attitude of Mr. Redmond and the party, as a whole, towards the strike was one of strict neutrality. Politically, between the fact that the protagonist of the employers was Mr. Murphy, and the fact that

<sup>1</sup> The attitude of Mr. Murphy was roughly that of the 'All-for-Ireland' group; it was more especially identified with that of Mr. T. M. Healy. The main point of this criticism, as it was afterwards set forth by Mr. William O'Brien, was that up to a certain point the consent of Unionist Ulster was perfectly negotiable, and should have been sought at the time when the Ulstermen's opposition was treated with derision by the party; and that, if such consent were honestly sought and unreasonably withheld, the party should have pressed for a General Election which would give the Government a popular mandate to nip the Carsonite movement in the bud.



the taint of anti-clericalism—from which in earlier years he had not himself been altogether free—clung about Larkin, Mr. Redmond's position was very difficult, and strict neutrality was, perhaps, the only possible policy which he could adopt for the party. Personally his sympathies, as a man always humane, were probably engaged on the side of the strikers; and, though as a believer in reformatory rather than revolutionary means he must strongly have deprecated their methods, his shrewd political instincts must at the same time have satisfied him that, on any far-seeing view of affairs, Mr. Murphy's determination to break the strike by sheer process of starvation was a calamitous blunder. In labour affairs generally Mr. Redmond's attitude, in normal conditions, would have been of much the same complexion as what is known in England as 'Tory Democracy.' His connection with the great strike—or rather his aloofness from it—is noted here because the rising of 1916, whose reactions were to wreck his policy so far as his own lifetime was concerned, may be regarded in large measure as a direct sequel to the labour upheaval in Dublin in the winter of 1913.

It would be tedious, and it is unnecessary, to follow in detail Mr. Redmond's part in the Parliamentary struggle over the Home Rule Bill from the date of its first introduction in 1912 to the date of its final passage into law immediately after the outbreak of war in 1914. After a stormy session, lasting throughout the whole of 1912, the Bill was carried through the House of Commons for the first time, and, in accordance with expectation, was rejected by the House of Lords. Under the terms of the Parliament Act it had to be repassed by the House of Commons

without alteration, and again submitted to the Lords in two successive sessions. This procedure was adopted in 1913, but without a repetition of the detailed debates of the previous year, and the Lords rejected it for the second time. In the Parliamentary struggle of the two years, of course, Mr. Redmond took a leading part on the Nationalist side, and won by his untiring zeal, sagacity, and adroitness the reluctant admiration of his opponents as well as the enthusiastic admiration of his friends. In the Parliamentary arena, in a House of notable Parliamentarians, he filled a place such as perhaps not even Parnell had occupied.

In addition to his work in Parliament, Mr. Redmond conducted throughout these two years a continuous campaign in the English constituencies, meeting Unionist attack and consolidating Liberal support. It was said of him that some of his travelling feats during this campaign were of a kind to test the endurance of a younger man, but his robust constitution stood the strain well. In the great English centres which he visited, in London, in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds, Plymouth, and other cities, he was accorded enthusiastic receptions such as no Irish leader had ever before received, and such as few English leaders of the day could boast. With all this he scarcely missed attendance at the House of Commons on a single day when Irish interests were under discussion, being in the House from long before the beginning of each sitting until its close ; for, as he said afterwards at a dinner to which he was entertained by his colleagues, he asked no man to do anything which he was not prepared to do himself.

I may quote here an appreciation of Mr. Redmond's gifts as a Parliamentary written immediately after his death by the Irish Parliamentary journalist, Mr. Michael MacDonagh.

‘ Mr. John Redmond was a great Parliamentarian in every sense of the word. For many years he was one of the dominant and most esteemed members of the House of Commons, largely because of his gifts of character and eloquence. Were he not an Irish Nationalist he might well have aspired to be Prime Minister of England, such was his intellect, temperament, and character ; or, had he devoted himself to the law instead of to politics, to be a Judge of the High Court or Lord Chancellor. In the House of Commons the figure and appearance of a man tell in the making of an enduring and true impression on the assembly. As the Nationalist leader rose to speak, it was at once seen that he had a striking presence. In habit or mien he had a tendency to portliness. The face was strong. It is said that in the features of most people there is a hint of some animal or bird. The Roman nose and piercing eye of Mr. Redmond suggested the eagle. There was also something of the eagle's soaring flight in his lofty and sustained style of speaking. Indeed, in recent years, since debating has assumed more and more the qualities of good conversation, Mr. Redmond might truly be described as the only orator in the House of Commons. His mode of speech was far removed, however, from the ornate, flowery, and passionate, which somehow have come to be associated with Irish declamation. Nor, on the other hand, was it stiff or formal or severe like so much of the finest oratory of the British school.

‘ Mr. Redmond's speeches were models of lucid and consecutive exposition. The diction was always clear and unhackneyed, the reasoning terse and penetrating. There were also many passages, most moving, expressive of feeling and emotion, appropriate to the subject. Mr.



Redmond was also a perfect elocutionist. The voice was melodious, of a fine compass, and well modulated. The speeches were made all the more telling by the harmonies of a cultured delivery. What gave his oratory distinction and influence were its qualities of dignity, force, and persuasiveness. Above all, it was persuasiveness that appealed most to the audience. It was the mark of Mr. Redmond's sincerity and earnestness. That surge of deep emotion, with its appealing, moving note, merging often into melancholy pathos, at once arrested the attention of the House, retained it throughout the speech, and won immense sympathy. He always had a large as well as appreciative audience. I have heard all the chief speeches made by Mr. Redmond in the House of Commons, and my memory of the scene is invariably the same—the figure of the Irish Leader standing conspicuously at the gangway corner of the top bench on the Opposition side, swaying as he spoke, the voice resonant and musical, the chamber crowded in every part with attentive and deeply-interested members.

‘Mr. Redmond's direction was superb. He could lead, he could initiate and inspire policy, he could command obedience and discipline. As well as being a great Parliamentary debater he was a consummate Parliamentary tactician. He was imbued with the spirit of the rules, regulations, and usages of the House of Commons, and understood its idiosyncrasies. He well knew the way in which the assembly should be treated in order to gain his ends. Though he was disposed always to be conciliatory in disposition, and was never wanting in courtesy, he could take a strong line when he thought the occasion demanded it, and be unyielding in following it out. With his party his position as leader was unquestioned and unshakable, founded, as it was, on the confidence his followers had in his devotion to the cause, his watchfulness of its interests, and his fine qualities of intellect and character.

‘Mr. Redmond's skill as leader and ability as debater were especially notable in the stormy sessions immediately

before the war when the passage of the Home Rule Act to the Statute Book was constantly interrupted by scenes of excitement and confusion. He was most regular in his attendance. If he was not present at prayers, he always came in early during questions. How often in those days have I seen him appear through the swing-doors under the clock, a bunch of violets—his favourite flower—in the buttonhole of his frock-coat, pass up the floor and bow to the Speaker before turning to the right to ascend the gangway to his seat. The Nationalist members had, on the benches below the gangway, at that time such neighbours as the extremist and most uncompromising Ulster and English Unionists. Looking down from the Reporters' Gallery, I have witnessed many exciting incidents which sprang from this propinquity of elements so antagonistic, restless, and passionate. On such occasions Mr. Redmond exercised a restraining influence. He was all for order and decorum in the conduct of debate. Another of his characteristics was the close attention which he gave to the proceedings. While he sat in his place he always paid the man in possession the compliment of listening to what he had to say. Mr. Redmond, in small things, as well as in things vital, was a great man.'

I need not supplement with the details of the political controversy in which he applied them this able and enthusiastic appreciation of the political qualities which Mr. Redmond exhibited during this period. During that period, moreover, history was made, essentially, much less at Westminster than in Ireland.

## CHAPTER VII

### REDMOND AND SINN FÉIN

AT this point it is necessary to retrace our steps a little and consider the emergence in Ireland of an influence hostile to Mr. Redmond and the whole policy for which he stood. It was an influence destined in the end to wreck that policy so far as his own lifetime was concerned; but it was an influence which was generally held in too little account, and was regarded by himself, perhaps, in too contemptuous a spirit until the very last years of his life—though, indeed, it was circumstances utterly beyond his control which then invested it with a novel and, for him, catastrophic importance. I mean the influence which, though the description, as will appear, is not strictly accurate, may for convenience' sake be comprised under the generic definition of *Sinn Féin*.

In a speech in Ireland in the summer of 1907, Mr. Redmond thus described the Nationalist movement and its needs:

‘A Parliamentary Party representing Ireland in the British Parliament is as necessary as—from some points of view is more necessary to-day than—at any period since the Union; and further than that, I say that the conditions upon which such a party can be of value and can achieve victories for Ireland remain to-day absolutely unchanged.

‘First of all, the party must be the mouthpiece of a



united, organised, and determined people at home. . . . The second condition, without which no party in Parliament can be of any value, is that it must be a united and pledge-bound party. Further than this, the party, to be useful to Ireland, must be an independent party. It must be independent of all political parties. . . . We have no alliance with the present Liberal Government. We would make no alliance with them except upon one condition, and that would be that they would not only determine to introduce a full Home Rule Bill for Ireland, but that they would make it the first and paramount item of their policy. With reference further to the party, if it is to be useful it must be composed of honest, capable men. In this matter the party is the result of the action of the Irish people themselves. . . .

‘Now,’ concluded Mr. Redmond, ‘with such a party as I have described, united, pledge-bound, disciplined, independent of all English parties, composed of honest and capable men, and, above all, representing a determined, organised, and united people at home—with such a party it is my profound conviction that we can in the future, as we have done in the past, win great ameliorative reforms for the people of Ireland; and further that we can, in a comparatively short space of time, win for this country the right of full national self-government.’

Such was Mr. Redmond’s *apologia* for the policy of the Parliamentary Party; and it may be repeated here that in making it he not only expounded a political theory, but expressed an intense personal conviction. For he was always and above all else himself a ‘Parliamentarian,’ a convinced constitutionalist. He thought and spoke of all political, social, and economic grievances in terms not of revolution, but of reform, and ‘Parliamentarism’ was to him the language of all constitutional pro-

gress. Now the hostile influence which is conveniently described as *Sinn Féin* struck at the very roots not only of his policy, but of his whole habit of mind. It had, perhaps, apart from its purely Irish development, something in common with that contemporary European movement of impatience with, and revolt from, 'indirect' political action which finds one of its expressions in the theory of Syndicalism.

This hostile influence traversed the entire basis of the constitutional movement as it was stated in the policy of the Parliamentary Party. It denied that this party, taken on its own terms, was in fact independent of English political parties, and charged it with a subservience to English party considerations actively detrimental to the best interests of Ireland. It denied that the party system in fact produced 'honest, capable men,' and charged it with making the discipline of the pledge binding the members of the party an instrument of tyranny, which at once imposed members whose only necessary qualification was complaisance in the leader's infallibility upon the electorate and stifled all independent political thought in that electorate. But, over and above such criticism of detail, as it were, it denied as a whole the validity of the Parliamentary policy revived and reorganised by Parnell and continued and developed by John Redmond; and it proposed instead a new policy which, though in its essence revolutionary, did not contemplate reliance upon actual physical force.

'The fact should be borne in mind,' said the report of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland in 1916, 'that there is always a section of

opinion in that country bitterly opposed to the British connection, and that in times of excitement this section can impose its sentiments on largely increased numbers of the people.' As Mr. Birrell described it: 'The spirit of what to-day is called *Sinn Féin* is mainly composed of the old hatred and distrust of the British connexion, always noticeable in all classes, and in all places, varying in degree, and finding different ways of expression, but always *there* as the background of Irish politics and character.' It was the whole achievement of Mr. Redmond that, by reducing this spirit of irreconcilability to the *minimum* and inducing the mass of the Irish people to seek by peaceful means a constitutional compromise with Great Britain of the Irish national claim, he succeeded in recommending that claim to the British democracy. Nevertheless the old spirit of irreconcilability remained, in Mr. Birrell's words, 'always *there* as the background of Irish politics and character,' and capable of being brought to the surface again in circumstances conducive to its emergence.

Mr. Redmond inherited the policy of constitutional compromise from Parnell. After the failure of the physical force movement of the 'sixties—the Fenian movement—no alternative to Parnell's policy offered itself to the Irish people. For the short, sharp Parliamentary struggle predicted a pledge-bound party was formed, and the force of public opinion organised in support of its policy. But the Parliamentary struggle, in the event, was to be neither short nor sharp; and, as it proceeded under Mr. Redmond's leadership after the Parnellite split, the very weapon of a pledge-bound party, formed by



Parnell to wrest a measure of Irish autonomy from the Imperial Parliament, tended inevitably in some degree to cast Irish politics in an inflexible mould of uniformity, and to establish a particular and rigid standard of political orthodoxy. It would have required a more than human—certainly a more than Irish—capacity for discipline if the restraints of this system in their turn had not tended to gall the more ardent spirits of Irish Nationalism.

But this impatience with the restraints of the system of 'machine' politics, as its critics described them, was kept in the main within bounds. There were no formal secessions from the party beyond that of Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. T. M. Healy, and their group of 'All-for-Irelanders,' and this secession was more a matter of personalities than of fundamental principles. The disruptive tendency expressed itself rather in criticism of his tactical methods than in open revolt from Mr. Redmond's policy as a whole. The general strength of his position was buttressed principally by two factors—one, the lively recollection of the impotence to which the divisions at the time of the Parnellite split had long reduced the Nationalist movement; the other, the absence of any alternative to his policy except the broken and discredited weapon of physical force.

Now, from the point of view of political strategy, the appeal of *Sinn Féin* consisted precisely in the fact that it did propose a policy which was neither a policy of Parliamentary action nor a policy of physical force. The policy of *Sinn Féin* was formulated in 1904 by Mr. Arthur Griffith in his book *The Resurrection of Hungary*, in the forefront of which were printed the words of Sydney Smith:

‘It is impossible to think of the affairs of Ireland without being forcibly struck with the parallel of Hungary.’ In the preface of this book Mr. Griffith made it clear that he was setting out to show that the alternative to acquiescence in British government was not necessarily armed resistance. His object, as he stated it, was ‘to point out to his compatriots that the alternative of armed resistance to the foreign government of Ireland is not necessarily acquiescence in usurpation, tyranny, and fraud.’

‘A century ago in Hungary,’ wrote Mr. Griffith, ‘a poet startled his countrymen by shouting in their ears, “Turn your eyes from Vienna or you perish.” The voice of Josef Karman disturbed the nation, but the nation did not apprehend. Vienna remained its political centre until fifty years later. The convincing tongue of Louis Kossuth cried up and down the land, “Only on the soil of a nation can a nation’s salvation be worked out.” Through a generation of strife and sorrow, the people of Hungary held by Kossuth’s *dictum* and triumphed gloriously. The despised, oppressed, and forgotten province of Austria is to-day the free, prosperous, and renowned Kingdom of Hungary. . . . Hungary is a nation. She has become so because she turned her back on Vienna. Sixty years ago Hungary realised that the political centre of the nation must be within the nation. When Ireland realises this obvious truth and turns her back on London, the parallel may be completed. It failed only when two generations back Hungary took the road of principle, and Ireland the path of compromise and expediency.’

In a hundred pages Mr. Griffith compressed a

vivid sketch of the history of the Hungarian constitutional struggle against Austria from 1849 to 1867, when, after Sadowa, the emancipation of Hungary was achieved and the Emperor Francis Joseph was crowned King at Pesth. 'Hungary won her independence,' he urged, 'by refusing to send members to the Imperial Parliament at Vienna or to admit any right in that Parliament to legislate for her.' As the ancient Hungarian constitution was revived, so could Irish independence again be won, as acknowledged in the English Renunciation Act of 1782. Austria illegally suspended that constitution and declared it invalid. Déak stood for eighteen years insisting that it was not abolished, since it could not be abolished save with the consent of the whole people of Hungary. He refused all compromise, and ignored the laws passed for Hungary in defiance of the constitution. It was inevitable, Mr. Griffith insisted, that such an attitude must baffle Austria or any other nation towards which it was assumed, and leave her no alternative to unconditional surrender except government by the sword.

Protesting against the policy of Mr. Redmond and the Parliamentary Party, Mr. Griffith quoted the adverse criticism which Beust, who arranged the *Augsleich* with Hungary, passed on Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886. Beust, in pressing the analogy between the Irish and Hungarian questions, admitted that Austria would never have conceded Hungary's demand had Hungary not made it impossible for her to refuse it by the policy she adopted and persisted in for eighteen years. England similarly would never concede Ireland's demands



unless Ireland made it impossible for her not to concede them. Mr. Griffith's policy was to be a policy of passive resistance. The attendance of Irish members at Westminster should cease, since their attendance recognised the competency of the British Parliament to make laws to suit Ireland. A National Assembly should be formed in Ireland from the Irish representatives. Ireland should set up a consular agency of her own, as Hungary did, to secure a profitable market for Irish goods abroad. 'The British Civil Courts' in Ireland should find their 'supersession by the institution of Voluntary Arbitration Courts' such as the Young Irelanders projected and the Hungarians established. The Irish abroad, especially in America, would form a valuable auxiliary both by rendering aid to Irish industrial enterprises and thwarting the designs of British foreign policy, as the Hungarian exiles did from 1849 to 1867. 'It would of course be a principal duty to keep Irishmen out of the ranks of the British armed forces. In Hungary the County Councils saw so effectively to this that the Austrian army was rendered ineffective, and went to pieces in seven days before the Prussians.'

In conclusion Mr. Griffith wrote: 'We have merely roughly indicated how the policy which made Hungary what it is to-day may be applied to Ireland. There is no doubt of the readiness of the people to follow. The people of Ireland are not less patriotic and not less intelligent than the people of Hungary. Three-fourths of their misfortunes are traceable to their pusillanimous, incompetent, and sometimes corrupt leaders. An Irish Déak would have found in Ireland a support as loyal and as strong as Déak

found in Hungary. But an Irish Déak never appeared, and shallow rhetoricians imposed themselves on the people in his stead.' And again: 'One strong, honest man in Ireland in 1867, after the failure of the Fenian insurrection, apprehending the significance of the coronation of Francis Joseph at Pesth, could have rallied and led the country to victory. Ireland did not produce him. Ireland produced Isaac Butt, the apostle of compromise, who, by himself and his successors, has led the country to the brink of destruction.'

*The Resurrection of Hungary*, the book which was the genesis of *Sinn Féin*, had an enormous circulation, and the preface to the second edition claimed that 'no book published in Ireland within living memory had been so widely read.' In the winter of 1905, the year following its publication, the first *Sinn Féin* convention was held in Dublin. For a time the new movement seemed to threaten Mr. Redmond's ascendancy. It was in 1907 that its rise compelled him to make the *apologia* for the policy of the Parliamentary Party which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter. But after the first novelty of its appeal had worn off the movement languished, and its single experiment in contesting a by-election against the candidate of the Parliamentary Party certainly did not encourage Mr. Griffith's hopes of 'the readiness of the Irish people to follow.' Between 1907 and 1912 some of the earlier adherents of *Sinn Féin*, despairing of its practical possibilities, drifted towards the neo-Fenianism nurtured furtively and ineffectively by the avowedly revolutionary Irish Republican Brotherhood; while more returned to their belief

in the policy of Mr. Redmond and the Parliamentary Party.

Nevertheless, though by 1912 *Sinn Féin* was a small society, making its limited appeal to a company of writers and scholars, and to some extent to the smaller *bourgeoisie* of the cities, having lost what influence it once possessed as an active agent in Irish political life, its propaganda had still aroused a critical spirit and coloured the whole background of Irish political thought to the disadvantage of Mr. Redmond's policy. Mr. Arthur Griffith thus described the Home Rule Bill of 1912: 'The definition of the third Home Rule Bill as a charter of Irish liberty is subject to the following corrections: The authority of the proposed Parliament does not extend to the armed man or to the tax-gatherer. It is checked by the tidal waters and bounded by the British Treasury. It cannot alter the settled purposes of the Cabinet in London. It may make laws, but it cannot command the power to enforce them. It may fill its purse, but it cannot have its purse in its keeping. If this be liberty, the lexicographers have deceived us. . . . The measure is no arrangement between nations. It recognises no Irish nation. It might equally apply to the latest British settlement in a South Sea Island. It satisfies no claim of the Irish nation whose roots are in Tara, or the Irish Nationalism which Molyneux first made articulate.' When Mr. Griffith wrote this mordant criticism of the Home Rule Bill of which Mr. Redmond had secured the introduction, there may have been few Irishmen who called themselves *Sinn Féiners*, but there were many who were disposed to agree with his contempt for the measure



which Mr. Redmond claimed as the charter of Irish liberties.

But it was in a more subtle fashion than found expression in the sphere of practical politics, and to an extent quite incapable of measurement in terms of its direct and immediate political reactions, that the influence comprised under the generic heading of *Sinn Féin* tended to undermine in an increasing degree the secure ascendancy of Mr. Redmond and his policy in the public life of Ireland. The rigid conditions of party discipline under which his policy was necessarily framed produced inevitably a certain vacuum of living political thought in Ireland; and human nature, like Nature herself, abhors a vacuum. The political energies of Ireland were concentrated at Westminster, and public life in Ireland suffered in consequence a certain stagnation. As, upon the one hand, Irish politics pursued their stereotyped course, and as, upon the other hand, Irish idealism was slowly and gradually in process of revitalisation by those agencies which are known comprehensively as the Irish Revival, much of the youth of Ireland grew indifferent to politics, and sought an outlet for its energies in other directions.

Apart altogether from its political aims and methods, the original objects of *Sinn Féin* had in them much that was calculated to attract the more thoughtful type of Irishman; in general the idea that Ireland should cultivate her own resources, spiritual and material, and look for salvation from within, rather than depend upon Parliamentary intrigue and the chances and changes of English party life. While intellectually the Home Rule policy was to a large

extent sterile, intellectually *Sinn Féin* was fertile ; and, having much in common with them, it gave an impetus to all those intellectual movements which, while none of them was inimical to the Home Rule policy of Mr. Redmond, competed with it with success in offering a romantic outlet which that policy did not offer.

By a paradox easily intelligible, it was Mr. Redmond's very success in gaining what he rightly described as 'great ameliorative reforms' for the people of Ireland which tended to undermine the popularity of the constitutional movement as he directed it. The period of his leadership of the Parliamentary Party was a period of emancipation for Ireland. It was the period of the conclusion of the land war and the final recovery of the land by the people in the successive Land Purchase Acts ; of the measures for the betterment of social conditions such as the Labourers' Acts and the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and the Congested Districts Board ; of the grant of autonomy in local affairs by the passing of the Irish Local Government Act ; of the improvement in educational facilities and the removal of long-standing and serious Roman Catholic educational difficulties in the establishment of the National University of Ireland.

All this material advance was accompanied by a profound stirring of national consciousness which found a manifold expression. The national spirit, which had been for generations refused expression, flowered, with its partial emancipation in the material sphere, into an intense spiritual life. The generation covered by the active political life of Mr. Redmond

was the generation of the reincarnation of potent antique ideals and of equally potent modern ideals deriving from them: of Standish O'Grady and the *History of Ireland: Heroic Period*, the recapture of the inspiration of Ireland's heroic age, the epic emotion of the past; of the modern Irish literary revival of which, for all the diversity of form and method between himself and his offspring, Standish O'Grady was the authentic father; of the Fays, and the dramatic movement, the Irish National Theatre and the folk-drama of Synge and Colum and their followers; of Dr. Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League and the Language movement; of 'A. E.' and Sir Horace Plunkett and the co-operative movement which sought to recreate the old communal civilisation; of the Irish industrial revival.

Towards all, or nearly all, these movements Mr. Redmond adopted a sympathetic attitude. Only to one of them—the co-operative movement—did he take up, largely under the influence of Mr. Dillon, a hostile attitude, on the ground that it was, or might be, a 'red-herring' drawn across the trail of Home Rule. Towards what has come to be called comprehensively the 'Irish-Ireland' movement he was entirely friendly, but always within certain limits and with certain reserves. He was, within those limits and with those reserves, a Gaelic League supporter. His own children were taught Irish. He was in full agreement with the revival of Irish as a spoken language; it was his efforts which were largely responsible for getting it placed on a level with the classics in the Intermediate Examinations. He was a keen admirer of Irish art and a







*Chancellor*

AT THE CLONGOWES CENTENARY, 1914

JOHN REDMOND WITH HIS BROTHER WILLIAM (ON THE LEFT) AND HIS SON WILLIAM ARCHER REDMOND

stalwart upholder of the distinctive character of Irish genius.

But in all this he lacked that touch of fanaticism which distinguished the more ardent believers in the ideal of 'Irish-Ireland.' If he opposed 'Anglicising' influences in Ireland, it was only because he believed in the objective value of racial differences ; and he was not prepared to go to the extreme of the 'Irish-Irelander' who would expel every English influence and espouse every Irish influence solely because the one was English and the other was Irish. If he believed in Irish literature, he was not of that movement which would seek to dismiss the tongue of Swift and Burke ; there were few Irishmen of his time who possessed a greater devotion to, and a greater knowledge of, the genius of Shakespeare. There was to him, perhaps, a trace of smugness and self-satisfaction, or of hysteria, in *Sinn Féin* on its intellectual side and kindred Gaelic societies. Mr. Redmond's mind was essentially realistic, not retrospective. He was a man of many intellectual interests, but not of those thinkers who 'make thought their aim.' A practical man, he had little use for thought in public affairs which was not the channel to action ; and he was unable to regard the cultivation of Irish genius as any substitute for, though it might be the complement of, his own policy of constitutional action.

In the intense emotion of national expression which constituted the Irish Revival, there was, perhaps, inevitably, much of active resentment, in some of its manifestations, of any intrusion of internationalism. The Gaelic League, for example, tended increasingly to become an exclusive move-



ment—a movement which, jealously safeguarding that sense of nationality which it was designed to foster, suspicious of renewed assaults upon it, in a passion of nationalism shut out rigorously any external influence which might weaken the impact of its creed upon the awakening mind of the Irish people. It was a phase, common to the development of all intellectual nationalist movements—which ever tend to turn to jingoism unless they find their proper complement in internationalism—which would in normal circumstances probably soon have been outgrown. But Mr. Redmond was naturally unsympathetic to it, and especially to the extreme anti-English bitterness which accompanied it.

In the good, as distinguished from the bad, sense, Mr. Redmond was an Imperialist. He believed in the British Empire, with all its faults, as an instrument of civilisation and progress whose existence was not incompatible with national freedom. He believed that within the limits of the Empire Ireland's national aspirations could be fully satisfied. He was no less proud of the share which Irish swords had taken in building the Empire, than of the contribution which Irish pens had made to the commonwealth of English literature. Mr. Redmond, indeed, was the first leader of Irish Nationalism who realised from personal observation the Imperial aspect of the Irish question. His visits to the self-governing Dominions had satisfied him that, if the Irish question had become an Imperial question from the English point of view, the fact that it had become so from the Irish point of view also raised an entirely new set of considerations from those envisaged by the *Sinn Féiner* and the 'Irish-Irelander.' He could

not admit the validity of the full implications of a political theory, based upon an emotional nationalism unrestrained by political facts, which, pressed to its logical conclusion, must mean not only the complete separation of Great Britain and Ireland, but also the disruption of the Empire in which the Irish element is everywhere a factor with which to reckon.

Mr. W. T. Stead has given in his character sketch of Mr. Redmond an impression by Mr. W. M. Crook—who made Mr. Redmond's acquaintance in Dublin when they were both law students—which may appropriately be quoted here. 'When I first met Mr. Redmond,' he said, 'I was more or less of a Separatist. He made me an Imperialist. I do not use the word to designate an admirer of the gorgeous orientalism of Benjamin D'Israeli, nor yet a follower of the narrowly insular policy of an uneducated Birmingham tradesman. John Redmond knew the Empire. His wife was an Australian, and even when I first met him he had been round the world. The great free communities, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and even the United States, were to him in large part Irish estates. Irish blood and Irish brains had helped them to freedom and to prosperity. It was a new point of view to us. I do not speak with authority, but I do say with some confidence that never, while John Redmond is leader, will the Irish Party consent to be deprived of their rightful share in the government of their Empire.' This 'Imperialism' of Mr. Redmond, combined with that antipathy to the extreme of the 'Irish-Ireland' philosophy which derived from what his nephew, Mr. Redmond-Howard, has called 'a certain Englishness about him which appeals to the

more sober-minded,' was precisely that quality in him which *Sinn Féin* held *anathema*.

To what extent Mr. Redmond's position was being undermined by *Sinn Féin* propaganda before the war, it is difficult to say, and perhaps scarcely relevant to consider; for the war introduced into the Irish situation influences which completely transformed the situation. It may be said, however, that upon the definitely political side, superficially at least, it appeared to do his policy little material damage. It did assist powerfully in arousing a critical spirit, but it did not offer any acceptable alternative to the policy of the Parliamentary Party, Mr. Redmond's position in the country remained sufficiently secure, his following sufficiently numerous and upon the whole sufficiently disciplined, to enable him to devote his whole energies to the campaign for Home Rule without fear that the basis of his authority in Ireland would be cut from beneath him; and there can be little doubt that, had he succeeded in carrying that campaign to full success, and secured the bringing into operation of the Home Rule Bill, his achievement would have silenced almost all criticism of the imperfections of that measure, and enabled him to enter upon his career as Prime Minister of a self-governing Ireland in the assured enjoyment of commanding popularity and prestige.

In default of that success the effect of the influence of the *Sinn Féin* and kindred movements upon Mr. Redmond's position was briefly this—that he was conducting a constitutional policy in an atmosphere increasingly revolutionary. I use the word in its broadest sense, not in its narrower political sense. It is a facile view which would attribute to the



'Irish Revival' movements any direct responsibility for the rising of 1916. But there may clearly be traced to them, or rather to the mood from which they sprang, an indirect and perfectly innocent responsibility for it. It implied the existence and growth of a revolutionary sentiment colouring all the background of the political material through which Mr. Redmond sought by constitutional action to achieve his end.

Mr. Redmond did not possess the revolutionary temperament. For that reason, and also because he was always concerned rather with the concrete facts of politics than with those abstractions which supply the deeper motive forces of political action, perhaps, he underestimated the potentialities of this revolutionary sentiment. 'What is called the *Sinn Féin* movement,' he said as late as the summer of 1915, 'is simply the temporary cohesion of isolated cranks in various parts of the country, and it would be impossible to say exactly what their principles are, or what their object is. In fact, they have no policy and no leader, and do not amount to a row of pins as far as the future of Ireland is concerned.' As an estimate of the superficialities of politics and in its application to *Sinn Féin*, strictly regarded, this judgment was sound; but as an estimate of deeper political forces, and of the influence of the revolutionary sentiment in general, it was profoundly mistaken.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REDMOND AND ULSTER

**A**FTER this necessary and very relevant digression we may resume the story of Mr. Redmond's career at the point where that story was broken off. In an earlier chapter it was remarked that it would be tedious, and indeed unnecessary, to follow in detail his part in the Parliamentary struggle over the Home Rule Bill during the year following its introduction—1913—when, under the terms of the Parliament Act, it had to be repassed by the House of Commons without alteration and again be submitted to the House of Lords. Upon the rejection of the Bill by the Lords in April 1913, a great protest meeting was held in the Dublin Mansion House, and Mr. Redmond then asserted that, in spite of the Lords, Home Rule would be the law in fourteen months. In the same year he opened the new bridge across the Suir at Waterford, and so sanguine was he then of the success of the Home Rule cause that he declared: 'I will not make any prophecy, but perhaps the next time I am amongst you it will be to tell you that we have not merely won the ramparts, but that we have planted the flag in the citadel.' During this year the organisation of armed opposition in Unionist Ulster proceeded apace. Simultaneously the Ulster Unionist leaders conducted a platform campaign against Home Rule

in England and Scotland. Sir Edward Carson, the principal speaker at these meetings, was followed indefatigably in every town he visited by Mr. Redmond, who addressed a rival series of meetings.

The development of the Parliamentary situation towards the close of 1913 requires a somewhat closer study. In the coming session the Home Rule Bill had to be submitted for the third and last time to the House of Lords, and this time, despite their rejection, must become law. During the winter of 1913-14, however, there were to be observed certain signs of weakening in some Liberal quarters on the question of Ulster. A speech by Mr. Winston Churchill at Dundee, and a letter to the Press from Lord Loreburn, coupled with the changing attitude of some of the leading Liberal newspapers, indicated that a movement for compromise on the Ulster question was afoot.

When the session of 1914 opened it became known that at least two powerful members of the Cabinet were of the opinion that Ulster could not be coerced, and it appeared probable that, unless some concession were made to the Ulster Covenanters, these Ministers would resign from the Cabinet and thereby destroy it. This development created perhaps the most serious difficulty with which Mr. Redmond had yet been confronted. It was certain that a policy of concessions to the Ulstermen would be highly unpopular in Ireland. On the other hand, the alternative—the break-up of the Cabinet—involved the wreck of all the work of the previous four years and the indefinite postponement of the victory of the Home Rule cause on the very eve of its realisation; for a dissolution meant that the



Home Rule Bill would cease to come under the benefit of the Parliament Act, and a General Election, with the democratic forces disorganised, seemed to offer a very uncertain prospect of recovering the lost ground within a reasonable time.

In this dilemma Mr. Redmond finally decided to accept the policy of concession, within certain severe limits and upon certain definite conditions. The proposal of the Government, to be embodied in an Amending Bill, was that each Ulster county should have the option of voting itself out of the operation of the Home Rule Bill for a period of three years (this period was finally extended to six years) at the end of which time they would all automatically come within the jurisdiction of the Irish Parliament. Before making his decision, Mr. Redmond commissioned Mr. Devlin and others of his colleagues to go to Ulster and learn on the spot the views of the Ulster bishops and of lay Ulster Nationalists upon the proposal. On their return they reported to him that the Nationalists of Ulster, clerical and lay, were willing to acquiesce in the concessions being offered.

Thereupon, Mr. Redmond, on the introduction of the Government's Amending Bill, declared that he and his colleagues, while protesting against the proposal, which he described as 'the extremest limit of concession,' would be prepared to accept the Bill, upon the strict condition that it was accepted by the Unionists as a final settlement of the controversy; otherwise, he made it clear, his party would reserve the right to oppose the Bill in its later stages. The Bill, in fact, was not so accepted by the Ulster Party, and the Volunteers in Ulster continued to arm and drill. The Government nevertheless pro-

posed to proceed with both the Home Rule Bill and the Amending Bill, despite the fact that the latter satisfied neither party in Ireland.

At this point, however, the centre of gravity shifted suddenly from Westminster to Ireland. On 24th March 1914, the Army Council addressed a letter to Sir A. Paget, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief the Forces of Ireland, ordering him to take measures which, on the face of them, appeared to be dictated merely by a desire to protect the military stores collected in certain Army mobilisation centres in Ulster, lest the Volunteers should be tempted to appropriate them. Their purpose was apparently defensive, not offensive. The Covenanters and their sympathisers, however, leapt to the conclusion that they portended the coercion of Ulster. 'The forces of the Crown,' Sir Edward Carson had stated the previous year according to his personal knowledge, 'are already dividing into hostile camps.' The truth of his statement was quickly proved. On March 20th General Paget, who had in the meantime set in motion the measures ordered in the Army Council's letter of March 14th, wired to the War Office reporting that the officer commanding the 5th Lancers (stationed in Dublin) stated that almost all the officers of that regiment were resigning their commissions, and that he feared the same conditions existed in the 16th Lancers, and that the men would refuse to move. He regretted to report also that 'Brigadier-General Gough and fifty-seven officers 3rd Cavalry Brigade (stationed at the Curragh) prefer to accept dismissal if ordered North.' General Gough and his officers at the Curragh, it appeared, had been in telephonic communication

with the Lancers officers in Dublin, and had concerted this refusal to obey the orders to move to Ulster with their units.

The affair, which came to be known as the 'Curragh Mutiny,' precipitated a new 'crisis' momentarily transcending the Home Rule issue itself. General Gough was summoned to London, and there obtained from some members of the Army Council a signed guarantee that he and his brother officers should in no circumstance be used to force Home Rule on the Ulster people. Mr. Asquith himself assumed the office of Secretary of State for War, and the 'crisis,' with some resignations from the Army Council, gradually died away. A new factor, however, had clearly entered into the situation. The Unionist Party leaders upheld the right of Army officers in such circumstances to refuse to obey orders. 'There is not,' said Mr. Walter Long in the House of Commons, 'anybody on that (the Government) side of the House who has not admitted that the impossible has been arrived at, and that you will never be able to use the full forces of the Crown to enforce the Bill upon Ireland.'

Mr. Redmond took no part in the debates in Parliament on the 'Curragh Mutiny,' but he did not leave his attitude in any doubt. It was expressed with a warmth of language unusual in him in the following message which he cabled to Australian supporters of the Home Rule cause :

'The Ulster Orange plot is now completely revealed. Carson and his army have not, and never had, the slightest intention of fighting as a fighting force. Against the regular troops they could not hold out a week. The plan was to put up the appearance of a fight, and then, by society



influences, to seduce the Army officers, and thus defeat the will of the people. The action of the commanders of some crack cavalry regiments, officered by aristocrats, has now fully disclosed the plan of campaign. The issue raised is wider even than Home Rule. It is whether the Government are to be browbeaten and dictated to by the drawing-rooms of London, seconded by officers who are aristocrats and violent Tory partisans. The cause of Irish freedom in this fight has become the cause of popular freedom, indeed of liberty, throughout the world. It is impossible to doubt the result of such a fight. The second reading of the Bill will be taken on Monday, and proceeded with until it finds a place on the Statute Book.'

The second reading debate took place on April 6th, and Mr. Redmond supported the motion in a speech of singular moderation. He had earlier, at a St. Patrick's Day banquet in London, declared emphatically, in reference to the Ulster question, that 'if force were interposed it would be met by force.' All the time, however, he had asserted his influence to keep the situation so far as possible under control. For example, just before the 'Curragh Mutiny,' when rumours were afloat and the position in Ulster was tense, it was proposed to hold a National Volunteer demonstration in Derry; Mr. Redmond telegraphed to the organisers urging them, in the interests of the National cause, to have the meeting abandoned.

In his speech on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill he stated his position with regard to Ulster frankly. He said that candidly he had not believed, and did not now believe, in civil war in Ulster. He did not say that the opposition to the Bill in Ulster was not real; he knew it was. But he believed that

when it became the law of the land a change would come. He did not shut his eyes to the possibility of disturbance in Ulster. But the House of Commons owed a duty to itself, owed a duty to Ireland, and owed a duty to the people of Great Britain, to pass the Bill and not allow itself to be deterred by threats of armed resistance to the law. The Bill was duly read a second time. The capital fact remained, however, that the Government had shirked a radical solution of the Army crisis, and that Mr. Redmond, in his references to Ulster, did not take account of the new factor in the situation which that crisis had evoked.

The excitement attending the 'Curragh Mutiny' was still high when another startling event occurred in Ireland. On April 24th, under cover of a test mobilisation of the Ulster Volunteers, a huge consignment of German Mauser rifles, estimated to number forty thousand, was landed at Larne, County Antrim, and at Bangor and Donaghadee, County Down. A proclamation had been issued in December 1913, forbidding the importation of arms into Ireland. Its issue was strongly resented by the National Volunteers, who saw cause for suspicion in the fact that the Ulster Covenanters should have been allowed by the Government for a year to equip themselves unhindered, while an obstacle was at once put in the way of southern Volunteer armament. It was at this time that Mr. Redmond asserted his control over the National Volunteers.

Without the rise of the National Volunteers there would have been no proclamation prohibiting the importation of arms into Ireland; without that proclamation there would have been no opportunity

for the Covenanters in Ulster to show how great and menacing was their strength. The gun-running at Larne and other parts of the North was an event of the first political importance. It offered a decisive challenge to the Government ; and the Government did not accept the challenge. The Ulster Covenanters had professed their indifference to the prohibition upon the importation of arms, boasting that they were already well equipped, and would have no difficulty in procuring further arms if necessary.

The departure of the yacht *Fanny* from Hamburg carrying the German rifles was announced in the newspaper three weeks before its arrival at Larne on April 24th. All the Volunteers were called out under cover of a test mobilisation. They guarded Belfast, where a decoy-boat was sent in to mislead the police, and surrounded Larne, Bangor, and Donaghadee. The affair from the Nationalist point of view was thus described by Mrs. J. R. Green. 'At the famous gun-running into the Irish harbour, the Provisional Government took possession of the King's high roads, ran telegraph wires to earth, confined the police to barracks, seized harbours, locked up officials of the Customs, rounded up suspected Nationalists and locked them in a farm, and generally broke the public laws of sea and land. Admirals, generals, officials of the coastguard, of police, of the post-office and telegraph service, all connived at the lawless deeds. Public law was suspended. Evidently at Larne the Provisional Government not merely claimed, but exercised, the right to rebel. The fact was emphasised on April 29th in a speech by Major Crawford, the captain of the



*Fanny*, to a Unionist Club in County Down: 'If they were put out of the Union . . . he would infinitely prefer to change his allegiance right over to the Emperor of Germany, or any one else who had got a proper and stable government.'<sup>1</sup>

England was startled by the Ulster Covenanters' exploit. Mr. Asquith described the gun-running as a 'gross, unprecedented outrage,' and declared that the Government would 'take without delay appropriate steps to vindicate the authority of the law.' No such steps, however, were taken. Some troops were moved up to the North of Ireland and two gun-boats were sent to Belfast Lough. The imported rifles had in the meantime been distributed and concealed throughout the province. Ulster preserved an attitude of calm, and the troops and sailors were effusively welcomed by the people. It was clear, however, that any action against the ringleaders of the Volunteer movement or any attempt to recover the hidden arms would provoke an immediate and ardent resistance.

The causes of the Government's failure 'to vindicate the authority of the law' were two. In the first place, there was the evident fact that it could not depend upon the army. Doubtless sufficient forces could have been employed to overcome the Ulstermen; but the mere use of them, in Lord Roberts's words, would 'split the army from top to bottom.' In the next place there was the fact that Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon themselves opposed reprisals. The Cabinet was itself divided between forcing the issue and letting matters slide; a majority, perhaps, favoured the latter course; and

<sup>1</sup> *Ourselves Alone in Ulster.*

the attitude of the Nationalist leaders probably determined it in this course of action, or inaction.

This attitude of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon (which did not become known until later) appeared remarkable, but it was easily explained. In general Mr. Redmond was not in the habit of taking his fences before he came to them, and he doubtless preferred to let the situation develop normally, trusting that the development would in some way turn favourably for his hopes. But, more particularly, the Nationalist leaders were now themselves (though very much against Mr. Redmond's will) involved in illegal associations in the South of Ireland; and, if they had demanded punishment for the Ulstermen, they would have left themselves open to the charge—and it would certainly have been brought by critics on their own side—of conspiring against the existence of the National Volunteers, whose spokesmen expressed the greatest admiration for the daring and cleverness of the law-breakers of Ulster.

The circumstances attending the 'Curragh Mutiny' and the Larne gun-running destroyed the hopes that Ulster Unionism might develop along anti-English lines. The same circumstances showed that, in the Government's view, it was not practicable to employ the forces of the Crown to coerce Unionist Ulster. Casement, in his speech from the dock at his trial two years later, held that these events gave proof that British military power was always in the last resort the enemy of Irish Nationalism. The success of the 'Curragh Mutiny' and the frank delight of the English upper classes at the equally successful *coup* at Larne were widely regarded in Ireland as supplying convincing proof that Ireland could expect no fair

play from those who really ruled in England. Unquestionably these events contributed towards promoting a revolutionary sentiment in Ireland and shook Mr. Redmond's position in the country by exposing the weak spot in his policy of alliance with English Liberalism.

On the other hand, he gained popularity from his association with the National Volunteers. The committee of that body issued in June a manifesto urging the immediate withdrawal of the proclamation prohibiting the importation of arms into Ireland, and declaring that the action of the Government had placed in the way of Irishmen favourable to national autonomy obstacles which 'admittedly are inoperative in the case of those opposed to Irish self-government,' that 'the right of free people to carry arms in defence of this freedom' was 'an elementary part of political liberty,' and that the denial of that right was 'a denial of political liberty and consistent only with a despotic form of government.' The concluding passage of the manifesto, which was signed by Mr. John MacNeill and Mr. L. J. Kettle, showed that the relations between the Volunteer organisation and Mr. Redmond were closer and more genial. 'We are glad to recognise,' it ran, 'that the time has come when the members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, with Mr. John Redmond at its head, have been able, owing to the development of the Irish Volunteer Organisation on sound and well-defined National lines, to associate themselves by public declaration with a work which the nation has spontaneously taken in hands.'

The militarist *Morning Post* had called upon the Government to admit the fact that 'the Army has



killed the Home Rule Bill.' The Government did not do so explicitly ; but it was perfectly clear that the majority of the Cabinet and the Liberal Party were not sufficiently ardent in the cause of Irish Nationalism to provoke on its behalf the sentiment of civil war in their own country. The Army certainly appeared to have 'killed the Home Rule Bill' so far as Unionist Ulster was concerned. To every party, the Irish Party included, the exclusion of Ulster, or a part of the province, from the Home Rule Bill was now a practical certainty.

The Parliamentary situation, however, was anomalous. The Government still proposed to proceed with the Home Rule Bill and with the Amending Bill which, from opposite points of view, Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson both alike rejected. While this somewhat unreal situation persisted at Westminster excitement was running very high in Ireland, and the gravest fears were entertained that some unfortunate incident on one side or the other might set a light to the explosive material in the country.

Finally, when the Home Rule Bill had again been introduced and read a second time, the King intervened with a proposal that a conference between leaders of both sides should be held, to see if some way out of the *impasse* could not be discovered. The King's proposal was, of course, accepted, and the conference assembled in Buckingham Palace. It consisted of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George representing the Government, Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon representing the Nationalists, Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law representing the English, and Sir Edward Carson and Colonel Craig

representing the Ulster Unionists, with Mr. Lowther, the Speaker of the House of Commons, as chairman.

The clouds of war were beginning to gather in Europe after the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo, when the Buckingham Palace Conference assembled. The King in person addressed the delegates. What happened at the conference was never officially disclosed; but it was assumed that the King in his address called attention to the European situation, and urged the importance of an agreed settlement from the European as well as the Irish point of view. The prospect of a European war in which Great Britain would be involved, however, was at this time still remote; had it been otherwise, the issue of the conference would probably have been different. As it was, there was no sufficient stimulus towards agreement, though undoubtedly serious efforts were made to reach it. Though, as has been stated, nothing was officially made public with regard to the proceedings of the conference, it was currently reported that Mr. Redmond and his colleagues were now ready to make greater concessions than those embodied in the proposals recently rejected by Sir Edward Carson; the 'time limit' provision, it was contemplated, should be omitted. It was understood that the conference finally broke down over the question of the counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh, which, although inhabited by a Nationalist majority, were regarded by the Ulster Protestants as an inalienable heritage.

This question of the exclusion of a part of Ulster from the operation of Home Rule—'partition' as it came to be called in Ireland—was to recur after

the rising of 1916, and it will be convenient to consider here Mr. Redmond's attitude towards it. No agreement was reached on the question at the Buckingham Palace Conference; but in 1916 an agreement, whereby six Ulster counties were to be provisionally excluded from the operation of the Home Rule Act, was reached, though never ratified, between Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson. Mr. Redmond, before he accepted this proposal, had said that it was 'unworkable.' That apparent contradiction probably supplies us with the clue to his attitude. The view which he seems to have taken was this: The Ulstermen's demand for exclusion was never put forward on its merits. It was rather a tactical move, made with the object of putting a spoke in the wheel of Home Rule, in the expectation that the 'partition' of Ireland—'a statutory denial of the National claim,' as a Tory spokesman triumphantly described it—would never be accepted by the Nationalists. This Ulster position, however—if I may pursue the military metaphor—was capable of being outflanked. The correct tactical reply to the Ulstermen's demand for exclusion was to treat it not as a tactical move to defeat Home Rule, but as a demand put forward on its own merits; to accept it as such; and to confront the Ulstermen with a real prospect of 'partition.' Those industries largely international in character, which exerted a great influence in Ulster Unionist politics, might be unmoved by such a prospect, but the commercial interests in Ulster which depended upon the rest of Ireland would be in a different case.

Sir Horace Plunkett in 1917, when urging the Ulster Unionists to take part in the Irish Convention,



declared that 'unless I am greatly mistaken, partition in the last analysis may prove to be administratively and financially as distasteful to the North-East as for other reasons it is to the rest of Ireland.' It was not to be expected that the Ulstermen would retire at once from the position which they had adopted with such public and dogmatic emphasis; but a short exposure to the practical disadvantages of partition would probably decide them to throw in their lot with Home Rule Ireland. It was a case upon which the old Irish saying that the longest way round is sometimes the shortest way home had a very relevant bearing. All this, perhaps, was implicit in Mr. Redmond's acceptance of an expedient which he characterised as 'unworkable.' Some such calculation, at least, we may assume, lay behind the attitude towards 'partition' of a leader whose shrewd knowledge of permanent political forces equalled his ready grasp of the immediate practical possibilities of any given political situation. Mr. Redmond possessed a political quality the worth of which is commonly misunderstood and under-rated in Irish politics—the quality of patience.

No agreement on the 'partition' question, however, was reached at the Buckingham Palace Conference. The conference broke up on July 24th. Sir Edward Carson, in his speech in the House of Commons on Mr. Redmond's death, revealed an incident of this time highly characteristic of the man. 'As one who has been prominently identified with this great controversy,' said Sir Edward Carson, 'I say with absolute sincerity that during the whole of this period I cannot call to mind one bitter word having passed between us. Just before the war, when the

Irish situation was most threatening, I remember John Redmond coming to me, after the breaking up of the Buckingham Palace Conference, and saying, "For the sake of the old time on circuit, let us have a good shake hands."'

The failure of the Buckingham Palace Conference was celebrated in Ulster on the following day by a parade through Belfast, organised by the Provisional Government, of five thousand men in khaki with bands, rifles, and machine-guns. In Parliament the Prime Minister announced that, the conference having failed, the Government could only proceed with the Amending Bill, the second reading of which was accordingly set down for July 27th. Before that date was reached, however, a grave event had occurred in Ireland.

The National Volunteers had been preparing a *coup* by which they should show that in resource and daring they equalled the Ulster gun-runners. Early in the forenoon of July 26th—a Sunday—a large yacht sailed into Howth Harbour, near Dublin. Simultaneously with her arrival a force of about eight hundred Volunteers took possession of the pier and began to unload the rifles which formed her cargo. With these they marched off to Dublin. News of the operation was telephoned to Dublin, and a force of Metropolitan Police, with two hundred soldiers, was sent to intercept the Volunteers. The police and military force and the Volunteers met half-way between Howth and Dublin. The Volunteers refused to surrender the arms, and a scuffle followed, in which a non-commissioned officer of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the regiment concerned, was wounded, and some Volunteers had

their heads injured by blows of clubbed rifles. The majority of the Volunteers, seeing the direct road barred, took to the fields and made their way by circuitous routes to Dublin, where the news of the affair created intense excitement.

The detachment of Scottish Borderers, marching back into Dublin after the affray, was followed by a crowd, which made hostile demonstrations. At a part of the quays known as Bachelor's Walk some soldiers turned and fired on the crowd, killing three men and injuring many others. This unhappy incident aroused the most bitter and violent feeling in Ireland. On the following day—July 27th—Mr. Redmond at once moved the adjournment of the House of Commons in order to draw attention to the affair, and did so in a speech of great gravity, remarking that members would acknowledge that it was a difficult task for him to deal with the matter without some vehemence and heat, but he would endeavour to deal with it in a perfectly judicial spirit. In this matter, he said, blood had been shed and life had been lost, and it seemed to him that, unless most definite and drastic steps were taken to prevent a recurrence of events of this kind, disastrous consequences must certainly ensue. He proceeded to review at length the development of the Irish situation since the foundation of the Ulster Volunteers and the subsequent issue, after that force was armed, of the proclamation forbidding importation of arms into Ireland.

At the outset he declared that when the Larne episode occurred he and his colleagues realised the terrible risks and the terrible danger which proceedings of the kind entailed. He then recalled the



fact that, when the Government announced its decision not to take any immediate proceedings against the Larne gun-runners, he and his colleagues entirely approved of its attitude. Before the Government took its decision 'they (the Irish Party) made their view known, and they thought, after all that had happened, it would have been a futile, exasperating, and useless proceeding to enter upon a series of prosecutions in connection with that transaction.' 'If people held,' said Mr. Redmond, 'that the Government was wrong in not prosecuting the Larne gun-runners, he shared the responsibility.' But, he added, he and his colleagues had urged over and over again upon the Government the advisability of the withdrawal, or at any rate the suspension, of the proclamation. He then read a letter to the Chief-Secretary, in which, on June 30th, he had put his views upon the matter on record.

In this letter he urged the withdrawal of the proclamation on various grounds, especially its unequal working between North and South.

'This effect of this unequal working of the proclamation,' wrote Mr. Redmond, 'has been grave among our people, and has tended to increase both their exasperation and their apprehension. The apprehensions of our people are justified to the utmost. They find themselves, especially in the North, forced by a large drilled, organised, and armed body. Furthermore, the incident of the Curragh has given them a fixed idea that they cannot rely on the army for protection. The possession of arms by Nationalists would, in these circumstances, be no provocation for disorder, but be a means of preserving the peace by confronting one armed force with another, not helpless, but, by being armed, fully able to protect themselves.'

Having read the remainder of this letter, Mr. Redmond proceeded to say that its concluding paragraph exactly described what had happened on the previous day in Dublin. No such attempt to disarm a body of Volunteers, he added, had been made in all the long months that had passed in Ulster, and he asked who was responsible for 'this monstrous attempt to discriminate in the administration of the law between the various classes of His Majesty's subjects in Ireland.' The real responsibility rested on those who requisitioned the troops. (This was done by Mr. Harrel, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, whom the Government suspended pending an inquiry; Sir John Ross, the Chief Commissioner, who was technically responsible, sent in his resignation.)

Summing up, Mr. Redmond asked, first of all, that Sir John Ross should be suspended and put on his trial; secondly, that there should be a full judicial and military inquiry into the affair; thirdly, that the offending regiment should be removed from Ireland. He asked, finally, for the revocation of the proclamation, which, as it stood, would be a constant source of risk and of danger. He asked that the law should be administered impartially; that that which was not regarded as a crime in Ulster should not be regarded as a crime in other counties in Ireland; that so long as the Ulster Volunteers were allowed to drill and arm, and march with fixed bayonets and machine-guns, Nationalists should be allowed to do the same. In conclusion, said Mr. Redmond, with emphasis, 'I would let the House clearly understand that four-fifths of the Irish people will not submit any longer to be bullied or

punished or penalised or shot for conduct that was permitted to go scot free in the open light of day in every county in Ulster by other sections of their fellow-countrymen.'

In what manner this critical situation might have developed, in normal circumstances, it would be idle to speculate. The development of the European crisis rapidly submerged the Irish crisis, to which the newspapers had been devoting all their attention for the past eighteen months. The Amending Bill, consideration of which had been postponed by the Bachelor's Walk affair in Dublin, was set down again for debate on July 30th. When that date was reached the Government and the Opposition, in view of the menacing situation in Europe, decided upon a further postponement of the Bill, which, as a matter of fact, never came before the House of Commons again.

In Ireland, for the moment, it was as if a sponge had been passed over the tangled and tumultuous history of the past few years. One incident sufficiently illustrated the changed atmosphere in Ireland which the outbreak of war at once produced. The victims of the shooting affair in Dublin had been given a great popular funeral. The regiment concerned, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, had been confined to barracks, and Mr. Redmond had demanded its removal from Ireland. The same regiment, on the day of its embarkation on the mobilisation of the British Expeditionary Force, was heartily cheered through the streets of Dublin.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE WAR AND REDMOND'S CHOICE

‘**O**NE thing I would say,’ said Sir Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in his speech in the House of Commons on August 3rd, the eve of the British declaration of war against Germany; ‘the one bright spot in the very dreadful situation is Ireland. The position in Ireland—and this I should like to be clearly understood abroad—is not a consideration among the things we have to take into account now.’

It was this statement which drew from Mr. Redmond the historic speech in which he ranged Ireland beside Great Britain in the event of war. His speech was short, and it deserves to be quoted in full:

‘I hope,’ he said, ‘the House will not think me impertinent to intervene in the debate, but I am moved to do so a great deal by that sentence in the speech of the Foreign Secretary in which he said that the one bright spot in the situation was the changed feeling in Ireland. Sir, in past time, when this Empire has been engaged in these terrible enterprises, it is true that it would be the utmost affectation and folly on my part to deny that the sympathies of Nationalist Ireland, for reasons deep down in the centuries of history, have been estranged from this country. But allow me to say that what has occurred in recent years has altered the situation completely. I must not touch upon

any controversial topic, but this I may be allowed to say—that a wider knowledge of the real facts of Irish history has altered the view of the democracy of this country towards the Irish question, and I honestly believe that the democracy of Ireland will turn with the utmost anxiety and sympathy to this country in every trial and danger with which she is faced.

‘There is a possibility of history repeating itself. The House will remember that in 1778, at the end of the disastrous American War, when it might be said that the military force of this country was almost at its lowest ebb, the shores of Ireland were threatened with invasion. Then 100,000 Irish Volunteers sprang into existence for the purpose of defending those shores. At first, however—and how sad is the reading of the history of those days—no Catholic was allowed to be enrolled in that body of Volunteers, yet from the first day the Catholics of the South and West subscribed their money and sent it for the army of their Protestant fellow-countrymen. Ideas widened as time went on, and finally the Catholics of the South were armed and enrolled as brothers-in-arms with their fellow-countrymen. May history repeat itself. To-day there are in Ireland two large bodies of Volunteers, one of which has sprung into existence in the North and another in the South. I say to the Government that they may to-morrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. Ireland will be defended by her armed sons from invasion, and for that purpose the armed Catholics in the South will be only too glad to join arms with the armed Protestant Ulstermen. Is it too much to hope that out of this situation a result may spring which will be good, not merely for the Empire, but for the future welfare and integrity of the Irish nation? Whilst Irishmen are in favour of peace, and would desire to save the democracy of this country from all the horrors of war, whilst we will make any possible sacrifice for that purpose, still if the necessity is forced upon this country we offer this to the Government of the day. They may take

their troops away, and if it is allowed to us, in comradeship with our brothers in the North, we will ourselves defend the shores of Ireland.'

A writer in the London *Times*, believed to be Mr. Birrell, afterwards suggested that in thus offering Ireland's assistance in the war Mr. Redmond 'took the curve too sharply.' There is, however, no reason to believe that he was mistaken in his interpretation of the mind of the overwhelming majority of Nationalists. Pro-Germanism in Ireland at the outbreak of war was an altogether negligible sentiment. It existed, of course; the revolutionary *Irish Freedom*, edited by Sean MacDermott, afterwards one of the signatories of the Irish Republican Proclamation in April 1916, was frankly pro-German, and Roger Casement, in a series of articles published in America just before and immediately after the declaration of war, developed the pro-German foreign policy for Ireland which he had first expounded in *Ireland, Germany, and the Next War* in the summer of 1913. *Sinn Féin*, through its official organ, issued a declaration of neutrality. 'Ireland,' wrote Mr. Griffith, 'is not at war with Germany. She has no quarrel with any Continental Power. England is at war with Germany . . . Germany is nothing to us in herself, but she is not an enemy.'

But events showed how right Mr. Redmond was in his estimate of the Irish attitude towards the war, and how little weight *Sinn Féin* carried, still less the revolutionary pro-Germanism of MacDermott and Casement. Immediately after Mr. Redmond's declaration the Standing Committee of the National Volunteers unanimously expressed their complete



readiness to take joint action with the Ulster Volunteers for the defence of Ireland. The National Volunteers in the three Southern Provinces rose to the height of their popularity, and numerous peers and leading Unionists became officers in the force and induced their followers to join it. The Ulster Unionists, however, stubbornly refused to share in the emotion of a united Ireland.

Perhaps Mr. Redmond had hoped against hope that the great gesture with which he pledged Nationalist Ireland's support in the war would reconcile the Protestants of Ulster to the idea of Home Rule. When that hope failed he had perforce to descend to the plane of political realities. At the moment the outstanding fact in the political situation from the Irish point of view was that, while the Home Rule Bill was ripe for passage into law under the Parliament Act, it had not yet been safely placed upon the Statute Book. Mr. Redmond adopted the position that when the circumstances of the war arose it was the Government's declared intention to put the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book whether the proposals embodied in the Amending Bill were accepted or not.

'We desire,' he said in the House of Commons on the last day of August, 'that this thing shall be settled with as little controversy as possible. At the same time we must emphatically say that any proposals which will have the effect of depriving us of the enactment of the Irish measure would be instantly and warmly resented by us. Let me say one word more. There has arisen in Ireland the greatest spirit that has ever arisen in the history of the connection between the two countries for the reconciliation between the people of Ireland and the people of this country.'

There is to-day, I venture to say, a feeling of friendliness to this country, and a desire to join hands in the interest of this country, which never used to be found in the past, and I say with all respect that it would not only be folly, but it would be a crime, if that spirit were in any degree marred by any action which this country might take. I ask the House, and I ask all sections of the House, to take a course which will enable me to go back to Ireland and translate into vigorous action the spirit of the words I have used to-day.'

The reference in the last sentence, of course, was to recruiting; for it was now clear from Lord Kitchener's proposals that men were required not for home defence, but for active service abroad.

⤵ The proposal to place the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book was bitterly opposed by the Unionist Party. Finally, however, on September 15th, Mr. Asquith announced the Government's decision to pass it into law and simultaneously to put upon the Statute Book a Suspensory Act providing that no effective steps should be taken to bring it into practical operation for at least twelve months, the suspensory power to be further invoked by Order in Council if the war should still continue. This decision Sir Edward Carson described as 'an act of unparalleled treachery and betrayal,' and Mr. Bonar Law led the Opposition out of the House of Commons as a protest against it. Mr. Redmond, on the other hand, instantly interpreted it as a call upon him to redeem the pledge which he had given a fortnight earlier.

⤵ He defined his attitude towards the war in these words: 'In this war, for the first time for over a hundred years, Ireland felt that her interests were

the same as those of England. She felt that the British democracy had kept faith with her, and she knew that it was a just war. She was moved in a very special way by the fact that it was a war undertaken in the defence of a small nation and an oppressed people. There was not a heart in Ireland which was not stirred by admiration for gallant Belgium, and with a desire to come to her assistance. Alsace also appealed to the sympathy of the Irish people in its desire to go back to its ancient nationality. The Poles also had upon their side the sympathy of the Irish people for many generations. He would say nothing of France, the old friend of Ireland and champion of democratic freedom. The manhood of Ireland would spring to their aid in this war. On hundreds of platforms during the last few years he had declared that when the rights of Ireland were admitted by the democracy of England, Ireland would become the strongest arm in the defence of the Empire. The test had come sooner than they expected, but he told the Prime Minister that it would be honourably met. It was the duty of his countrymen, and should be their honour, to take their place in the fighting line.'

Immediately after this speech in which he saluted the enactment of Home Rule, Mr. Redmond crossed to Ireland to take up the task of recruiting. The atmosphere in Ireland was in the main propitious. The Irish people are traditionally a military people, and the times in Ireland, upon the outbreak of war, were warlike, so that martial enthusiasm was readily diverted into the unaccustomed channel of service in the British Army. That loaded atmosphere of gunpowder, in which Irishmen had lived



for a year and more before the war, found its natural discharge in one direction in the call of arms in Europe; as later it was to find another and unhappy discharge in the rising of Easter Week, 1916. Further, the appeal of the French tradition—the hospitality which the ‘wild geese’ found in France, of Sarsfield and St. Ruth, of the Irish Brigade which fought under the French flag on many a Continental field, of ’98 and Humbert—was potent, despite the sometimes anti-clerical policy of the Third Republic, to align the sentiment of Ireland on the side of the Allies. Again, the German invasion of Belgium, that monstrous outrage upon a small nationality, was bound to evoke a response from the country whose whole history was that of the assertion of the rights of small nationalities.

But Ireland was in an even greater degree than England isolated from European politics, and the traditional feeling against England as her only enemy was deep-seated and strong. Her people could scarcely be expected to intervene in the Allied cause in any mood of pure altruism unless it had seemed to them that in striking a blow for the rights of small nationalities in Belgium they were also striking a blow for the rights of small nationalities in Ireland. Mr. Redmond was right in insisting that the placing of Home Rule on the Statute Book must be the finally decisive factor in securing Ireland’s support of the war, and that without it there must be to Nationalists some aspect of cynicism in the spectacle of England inviting the assistance of Ireland in a war on behalf of the rights of small nationalities. It cannot be denied that there was much disappointment in Ireland over the fact that





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the operation of the Home Rule Act was indefinitely postponed ; but in general Mr. Redmond's acceptance of the suspensory arrangement was regarded as the best course possible in the circumstances. The enactment of Home Rule was at least for Nationalist Ireland a formal recognition by England of Irish nationality, and that recognition was of capital value in securing Ireland's support of the war.

On his arrival in Ireland Mr. Redmond lost no time in expressing in plain terms his conception of Ireland's duty in the war. He arrived from England on September 20th, and on his way to his home at Aughavanagh met and inspected some companies of the East Wicklow Brigade of the National Volunteers. He made a short speech to them. 'The interests of Ireland, of the whole of Ireland,' he said, 'are at stake in this war. This war is undertaken in defence of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country, a reproach to her manhood, and a denial of the lessons of her history if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and shrinking from the duty of proving in the field of battle that gallantry and courage which have distinguished their race all through its history. I say to you, therefore, your duty is two-fold. I am glad to see such magnificent material for soldiers around me, and I say to you : Go on drilling and make yourselves efficient for the work and then assert yourselves as men, not only in Ireland itself, but wherever the firing line extends, in defence of right, freedom and religion, in this war.'

In this impromptu fashion—for his meeting with

the Volunteers was accidental—Mr. Redmond began the vigorous recruiting campaign which, together with the members of his party (with some few exceptions, notably Mr. Dillon), he conducted during the last months of 1914, and the early months of 1915. The young men of Ireland, the majority of whom were by this time enrolled in the National Volunteers, responded to his appeal in large numbers. The greatest enthusiasm attended the progress of the recruiting campaign, and throughout the country recruits leaving home for the training depots were played off at the stations by the Volunteer bands.

Perhaps the crowning moment of Mr. Redmond's political life was reached on September 25th, when in the Dublin Mansion House he stood on the platform beside the Prime Minister of England, the Lord-Lieutenant and the Chief-Secretary for Ireland, and a number of leading Irishmen, Unionist and Nationalist. He stood there as the leader of an Ireland all but united within herself, and for the first time in centuries one in sympathy and spirit with Great Britain—the embodiment of a political miracle. 'I hope,' he said in his speech following Mr. Asquith, 'that no people in Great Britain will imagine that because there are a little handful of pro-Germans in Ireland, there is any doubt as to the sentiment of the Nationalists of this country.' 'I say to the Prime Minister, and through him to the people of Great Britain,' Mr. Redmond declared in conclusion, 'you have kept faith with Ireland; Ireland will keep faith with you.'

In his speech before Mr. Redmond, the Prime Minister had half-promised the formation of a special Irish Army Corps, and had added that he trusted the

Volunteers would become a permanent, integral, and characteristic part of the forces of the Crown. Mr. Redmond took up the point. 'I was delighted to hear the words of the Prime Minister with reference to the proposed treatment of Irish recruits. It is not enough to tell us that there are Irish regiments, recruited in Ireland, and inasmuch as they are Irish they form an Irish Army Corps: we want the thing done specifically, an Irish Army Corps created so that their deeds of valour in the field would be able to be garnered by us as one of the treasures of our nation in the future. I tell the Prime Minister he will get plenty of recruits, and of the best material. In my judgment the body of Volunteers will form an inexhaustible source of strength to the new Army Corps, and to the New Army which is being created.'

Mr. Redmond's speech in Wicklow on his arrival in Ireland, however, had precipitated a split in the Volunteer movement. A few days after the delivery of that speech the Dublin newspapers published a 'Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers,' signed by Mr. John MacNeill and several members of the original Volunteer Committee. The signatories to the manifesto declared that 'Ireland could not with honour or safety take part in foreign quarrels other than through the action of an Irish Parliament,' and repudiated 'the claim of any man to offer up the blood and lives of the sons of Ireland, while no National Government which could speak and act for the people of Ireland is allowed to exist.'

Mr. Redmond promptly replied to this challenge with an announcement that, owing to the publication of the manifesto by a minority—it was, of course,



a majority of the original members—he had taken steps to request the Provisional Committee to meet and reorganise the governing body of the Volunteers. The Volunteers thus split into two bodies. The great majority adhered to Mr. Redmond's leadership, and were afterwards known as 'National' Volunteers. The minority which seceded under Mr. MacNeill were known as 'Irish' Volunteers, and this faction, passing under the control of the revolutionaries, was later to be chiefly responsible for the rising of 1916.

It is important to observe here that this split in the Volunteer movement might have been averted, and that the ultimate responsibility for it belonged not to Mr. Redmond's attitude towards Irish recruiting, but to the attitude of the War Office towards Irish recruiting—the attitude which Mr. Lloyd George afterwards described as one of 'malignant' stupidity. Three months before the war Colonel Moore, the Inspector-General of the Southern Volunteers, had proposed the extension to Ireland of the Territorial Act, under which both the Ulster and the National Volunteers might enlist, and had discussed the question on these lines with the British Secretary for War, Colonel Seely.

When Mr. Redmond made his famous speech in the House of Commons on the eve of the declaration of war the natural solution seemed to be the embodiment of the two groups of Volunteers as Territorials and their drafting thence for foreign service. Immediately after that speech an officer on the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland proposed a scheme by which all the Volunteers in

Ireland, Unionist and Nationalist, should receive military training. He calculated that if the British troops were removed, as Mr. Redmond had suggested, there would be room for 20,000 men in barracks at one time, and these should, after a two months' training, be passed on to the standing camps, their places in barracks being taken by a new levy of 20,000 Volunteers. The most prominent men on the Volunteer Committee—not Mr. Redmond's nominees only, but also Mr. MacNeill and some of his friends—agreed to these proposals, and Mr. MacNeill accompanied Colonel Moore to the Royal Hospital, the military headquarters in Dublin, to hear them discussed. 'I want to lay stress on the fact,' said Colonel Moore in his evidence before the Rebellion Commission, 'that the leaders of the Irish Volunteers, and among them participators in the late rebellion, were at that time willing to join in the defence of the Empire, but were refused by the Government.'

Lord Kitchener refused absolutely to take action with the Volunteers in the sense suggested; and that refusal, coupled with the delay in the passing of the Home Rule Bill, at the outset damped Irish enthusiasm for the war. Colonel Moore, himself a supporter of Mr. Redmond's policy, thus described the situation as he saw it at this time from the inside. 'When at last the (Home Rule) Bill was signed, the enthusiasm was gone, and the fact that it was not to be put into force until after the war, with the threat of an undefined Amending Bill, left the uncertainty as great as ever. . . . Nothing but the enormous influence of Mr. Redmond and the leaders of the Irish Party prevented a universal

determined agitation against recruiting.' It speaks volumes for the authority of Mr. Redmond that he was able, with no more loss than was involved in the secession of the minority of the Volunteers under Mr. MacNeill and his friends, to make his policy of support of the war so largely effective.

The difficulties which Mr. Redmond had to face, however, were only beginning. His proposal to embody the Volunteers as Territorials was rejected in the case of the National Volunteers, but in effect, though not in form, was accepted in that of the Ulster Volunteers. It was months before Mr. Redmond could prevail on the War Office to assent to the formation of a distinctive Irish Division, and when it was at last in course of formation he encountered at every turn official obstacles to his attempt to base the appeal to national sentiment on a revival of the memories of the historic 'Irish Brigade,' while the Division was very largely officered by Unionists and Protestants. The 'Curragh Mutiny' was by no means forgotten in Ireland; and the suspicion that, for political reasons, influence was at work in the War Office to discourage too large a recruitment from Nationalist Ireland was increased by the very different treatment of the Ulster Volunteers.

In this case the War Office responded with alacrity to Sir Edward Carson's proposal for the formation of a distinctive Ulster Division of the New Army. The Ulster Division was composed almost wholly of Carsonite Volunteers and their sympathisers, and it was, in fact, a homogeneous political body. Several of the men who had been engaged in the 'grave and unprecedented outrage' at Larne



now occupied comfortable war situations. The commander of the Ulster Volunteers avowed that his men, now 'thoroughly trained and with vast experience of war,' would have no difficulty after the war in relegating Home Rule to the devil.

Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Bonar Law, the Leader of the Unionist Opposition, in Belfast in the late autumn of 1914, announced their intention after the war to repeal the Home Rule Act so far as Ulster was concerned. Mr. Bonar Law refused to stand on the same platform with Mr. Redmond on the occasion of Mr. Asquith's visit to Dublin; and Sir Edward Carson later ostentatiously declined an invitation to join with Mr. Redmond in addressing a recruiting meeting at Newry.

In May 1915, both Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Bonar Law were included in the first Coalition Government formed by Mr. Asquith. Mr. Redmond was offered a seat in the new Cabinet together with Sir Edward Carson. He refused it, as he was bound to refuse it, in accordance with the old Parnellite tradition which forbade any member of the Irish Party to accept positions in or under the Government. He would have appreciated the honour more had he not been aware that the Government knew that he must refuse it, and that the mere offer of inclusion to himself could not in the circumstances off-set the inevitable consequences in Ireland of the inclusion of Sir Edward Carson. Mr. Redmond, together with Mr. Dillon, in refusing the offer, wrote letters to Mr. Asquith warning him in the strongest possible terms of the effect of bringing Sir Edward Carson into the Cabinet. The net result was that Sir Edward Carson was brought into the Cabinet,

and Mr. Redmond was not ; and from that event dated the change in the spirit of Ireland.

‘How can any one in this House,’ asked Mr. Dillon in the House of Commons subsequently, ‘blame the Irish people if they distrusted the Government ? Home Rule was going to be treated as “ a scrap of paper ” and repealed when the war was over ; and from that hour our men left us by tens of thousands. In spite of all we (Mr. Redmond and his colleagues) could do we were met by the statement that England always broke her word to us, and “ How can you tell us for a single moment that she is going to keep this treaty with Ireland when she brings into her Cabinet a man who has given public notice that he will rebel again the moment the war is over, and hold his rifles for the purpose of tearing the Home Rule Act to pieces and treating it as a scrap of paper ? ” ’

From May 1915, indeed, Mr. Redmond began to fight a losing battle in Ireland. He laboured manfully throughout the following year to keep Ireland behind him in his war policy ; but the circumstances in which, to use the words that he employed afterwards himself, he had been ‘ let down and betrayed ’ by the Government, were too much for him. In the second half of 1915 the number of recruits fell away in an astonishing degree, and simultaneously the Irish Volunteers gained a great accession of strength. The National Volunteers, under Mr. Redmond’s control, at the same time were allowed—largely by force of circumstances, but not without his own tacit approval—to fall into decay. The question of the application of conscription in the autumn of 1915 gave a great stimulus to the Volunteer

movement. The representations of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon succeeded in securing the exclusion of Ireland first from the Registration Act and then from the Military Service Act, and this success for a time steadied his hold on the country.

The attitude of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon towards the vigorous propaganda conducted by *Sinn Féin* during the latter part of 1915 and the early part of 1916 was the same ; but their motives were entirely different. Both opposed the repressive measures fitfully and ineffectually undertaken by the Irish Executive. Mr. Dillon, however, opposed them because he felt that the revolutionary movement was so strong that repression could only precipitate an outbreak. Mr. Redmond, on the other hand, opposed them because he felt that the revolutionary movement was weak enough to be ignored with safety. Of the two Mr. Redmond was certainly the more right. As the strong reaction of public opinion which immediately followed the rising of Easter, 1916, was to show, the revolutionary party in Ireland was in itself of insignificant proportions, and had little following among the Irish people. At the same time there is no question that Mr. Redmond did underestimate the chances of an outbreak.

It was the aftermath of the rising which largely swept away in a storm of passion Mr. Redmond's authority in the country ; but before the rising it was rather opposition other than revolutionary—though strengthened indirectly by the revolutionary propaganda in the background—which seemed to menace his position. As the autumn of 1915 went on, many Irishmen strongly inclined towards the



Allied cause, and hitherto numbered among Mr. Redmond's supporters, began to think that an end should be made of the equivocal situation in which the Nationalist leaders professed unimpaired support of the war while an obviously discontented Ireland was more and more falling away from support of the war. The remedy suggested was the immediate operation of Home Rule, coupled with a frank assertion of Ireland's claim, as a poor and depopulated country, to special treatment in the matter of taxation and recruitment.

By the wording of the Suspensory Act of September 1914, the operation of the Home Rule Act was postponed for a year. When September 1915 arrived, the Government sought and obtained an Order in Council for a further postponement until March 1916. A strong movement grew up in favour of immediate Home Rule. Simultaneously a movement of protest grew up against the heavy burden which war taxation imposed on Ireland, especially by the Budget introduced in the early months of 1916. The financial clauses of the Home Rule Act were based on the allegation of Irish insolvency; but with the increase of taxation since the outbreak of war Ireland was now paying for Irish expenditure to the full, and in addition £5,000,000 annually as an Imperial contribution; moreover, the proportion of taxable income now taken from Ireland was more than twice that taken from Great Britain, nor did the money go, as it largely went in Great Britain, to the stimulation of war industries.

In these circumstances Mr. Redmond was strongly urged not only by his avowed critics, but also by

some of his own supporters, to do two things. First, he should press for the operation of the Home Rule Act in March 1916, when the second period of postponement arrived; next, he should secure for Ireland special treatment in the matter of taxation as he had secured it in the case of recruitment, attack the new Budget, and, if necessary, withdraw the support of his party from the Government. The pressure in both these directions was strong upon Mr. Redmond. Certainly his position in Ireland was becoming less secure. He was perfectly well aware that he could do much to restore it by pressing for the immediate operation of the Home Rule Act, or even to some extent by attacking the Budget. But he refused to do either. He had to make a hard choice between an alienation of English sympathy and a certain loss of Irish confidence. Faithful to the first tenet of his political creed, that the realisation of Ireland's aspirations depended on maintaining the sympathy and support of the British democracy, and, moreover, himself ardently for the war and sincerely desirous not to embarrass the Government in its conduct, he chose the former course. So in March 1916 the operation of the Home Rule Act was again postponed—this time until the end of the war—without protest from him.

It is idle to speculate how this equivocal situation would have ended; for in the following month it was swept away by the rising, and the whole character of the Irish question was radically transformed. This is not the place in which to deal at length with that tragic episode in recent Irish history. Profoundly as it bears upon the life of Mr. Redmond,

the Rebellion of Easter Week itself may be reviewed very briefly. It was commonly described afterwards as the *Sinn Féin* Rebellion ; but such a description has at best a sort of *ex post facto* justification. Though as a result of it—or rather of the circumstances of its suppression—*Sinn Féin* acquired an enormously enhanced popularity, and after the event every malcontent in Ireland rallied round the *Sinn Féin* banner, *Sinn Féin* itself had no direct responsibility for the rising. By a curious, but easily explicable, paradox, while the rising of 1916 was the making of *Sinn Féin*, *Sinn Féin* did not make the rising, except in so far as its somewhat *doctrinaire* philosophy of secession contributed to creating the explosive atmosphere in which the outbreak came—and this contribution was relatively not very large.

The rising was the direct product of three factors. First, and incomparably most important, was the social discontent bred in the ghastly slums of Dublin, fanned to desperation by the breaking of the great strike of 1913, and organised in the 'Citizen Army' commanded by James Connolly, Larkin's successor and the real motive force in the rising. At bottom the outbreak was an attempt rather at social than at political revolution. The second factor was a part of that small body of the National Volunteers, formed in response to the Ulster Volunteer movement, which, as the 'Irish' Volunteers, had seceded under Mr. MacNeill's leadership from allegiance to Mr. Redmond. The third factor, behind and acting upon these first two factors, was that irreconcilable remnant of the physical force movement surviving in the revolutionary secret society known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, in touch with kindred



spirits of extremism in the *Clan-na-Gael* in the United States, and through them supplied by Roger Casement with a *nexus* with Germany.

Perhaps the further suspension of the Home Rule Act contributed towards precipitating the insurrection; certainly the knowledge that the authorities were contemplating the forcible suppression of the organisation did much to precipitate it. In the end the rising was a hasty and ill-conceived adventure. It was the lack of premeditation in the launching of the enterprise which secured its first facile success, and the same cause produced its early and complete collapse. Outside of Dublin a few sporadic, unco-ordinated and ineffective outbreaks were easily suppressed. In Dublin the insurgents were able to seize the centre of the city, thanks largely to the fact that the rising took the authorities completely by surprise; the majority of the officers of the garrison, in fact, were absent at a race-meeting in the vicinity. The insurgents maintained their hold upon the centre of the city precariously and with increasing loss until the end of the week, when—numbering perhaps two thousand men at most—they surrendered unconditionally, and were disarmed and imprisoned.

Strategically the rising was serious, or rather might have been if the insurgent plans had not been hopelessly disarranged by the miscarriage of the Casement expedition. Politically it was, in itself, trivial. It failed so early and so completely for the precise reason, very largely, that the great mass of the Irish people did not approve it or support it. While there were many who admired the courage of the enterprise, its collapse left those who had taken

part in it with—immediately—no open supporters in the vocal body of the Irish people.

Mr. Redmond was not in Ireland at the time of the rising, which occurred while Parliament was in session. Mr. Dillon, his chief colleague in the Irish Party, happened to be at his house in Dublin, situated in a locality close to the centre of the insurgent operations. Mr. Dillon therefore had better opportunity than Mr. Redmond for appreciating the situation on the spot, and it was probably for this reason that Mr. Redmond left to him the main part of the Nationalist share in the Parliamentary debates on the insurrection.

Mr. Redmond's chief preoccupation at the moment was not so much its effect in Ireland as its effect on English public opinion. He expressed afterwards his fear that the rising would provoke in England an immediate demand for the repeal of the Home Rule Act. He lost no time in defining his own position towards it in a statement issued to the Press. 'My first feeling,' he said, 'on hearing of this insane movement was one of horror, discouragement, almost despair. I asked myself whether Ireland, as so often before in her tragic history, was to dash the cup of liberty from her lips. Was the insanity of a small section of her people once again to turn all her marvellous victories of the last few years into irreparable defeat and to send her back on the very eve of her final recognition as a free nation into another long night of slavery, incalculable suffering, weary and uncertain struggle?'

He went on to say that when the war came Ireland made a choice which was inevitable if she was to be true to all the principles which she had held through

all her history, and which she had just so completely vindicated on her own soil—namely, the rights of small nations, the sacred principle of nationality, liberty, and democracy. This was the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people, the opinion which thousands of Irish soldiers had sealed with their blood by dying in the cause of the liberty of Ireland and of the world. The doctrine that the policy of Ireland must be decided by Ireland herself had been contested ‘only by the very same men who to-day have tried to make Ireland the cat’s-paw of Germany. In all our long and successful struggle to obtain Home Rule we have been thwarted and opposed by that same section. We have won Home Rule not through them, but in spite of them. This wicked move of theirs was their last blow at Home Rule. It was not half so much treason to the cause of the Allies as treason to the cause of Home Rule.’

‘This attempted deadly blow at Home Rule carried on through this section,’ Mr. Redmond proceeded, ‘is made the more wicked and the more insolent by this fact—that Germany plotted it, Germany organised it, Germany paid for it. So far as Germany’s share in it is concerned, it was a German invasion of Ireland, as brutal, as selfish, as cynical as Germany’s invasion of Belgium. Blood has been shed, and if Ireland has not been reduced to the same horrors as Belgium, with her starving people, her massacred priests, her violated convents, it is not the fault of Germany. And a final aggravation of the movement is this. The misguided and insane young men in Ireland have risked, and some of them have lost, their lives. But what am I to say of those



men who have sent them into this insane anti-patriotic movement while they have remained in the safe remoteness of American cities? I might add that this movement has been set in motion by this same class of men at the very moment when America is demanding reparation for the blood of innocent American men and women and children shed by Germany, and thus are guilty of double treason—treason to the generous land that received them as well as to the land that gave them birth.’

Finally Mr. Redmond expressed his confidence as to the final result. ‘I do not believe that this wicked and insane movement will achieve its ends. The German plot has failed. The majority of the people of Ireland retain their calmness, fortitude, and unity. They abhor this attack on their interests, their rights, their hopes, their principles. Home Rule has not been destroyed. It remains indestructible.’

This statement of Mr. Redmond’s was issued on May 3rd. On the following day the Chief-Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Birrell, announced his resignation in the House of Commons; and Mr. Redmond said that he felt he had incurred some share of the blame which Mr. Birrell had laid at his own door, because he (Mr. Redmond) entirely agreed with Mr. Birrell’s view that the danger of an outbreak of this kind was not a real one, and what he had said might have influenced the Chief-Secretary in his management of Irish affairs. Mr. Redmond added that it was the duty of the Government to put down the outbreak with firmness; but he begged the Government not to show undue harshness or severity to the great masses of those implicated, on whose shoulders there

lay guilt far different from that which lay on the instigators and promoters.

A few days later Mr. Redmond called the Government's attention to the fact that the executions of insurgent leaders which had taken place in Dublin had produced popular resentment in Ireland, and asked that clemency should be extended to the other persons involved, in view of the precedent set by General Botha in South Africa, of the complete restoration of order in Ireland, and of the avowed condemnation of the movement by the overwhelming majority of the people in Ireland. Both publicly and privately Mr. Redmond worked hard to secure clemency for the leaders of the rising, but he was unable to induce the Government to restrain Sir John Maxwell's executions until a considerable number had been shot.

At this time a renewed Unionist agitation was set on foot for the extension of conscription to Ireland. In a debate on an amendment to the Military Service Bill with this object, Mr. Redmond expressed the profound conviction that, if he and his friends had had the power and the responsibility of the Government of their country during the past two years, when their opinions had been overborne and their suggestions rejected by the Government, the rising would never have occurred. With regard to conscription, he claimed from every member in the House an admission that, in opposing it, he was not animated by any desire to prevent getting men for the army, because he had done his best. Ireland, he asserted, had done well. She had over 150,000 with the colours at the present time who had shown a bravery that had covered them with glory, and it

was an ungenerous thing to attempt to taunt Ireland with not having done her duty in the war. He was convinced that the worst way that could now be attempted to get men was by enforcing conscription in Ireland. He had no hesitation in saying that, after recent events in Ireland, it would in his deliberate opinion be not only a wrong thing and an unwise thing, but wellnigh an insane thing, to attempt to enforce conscription.

In the same speech, in response to an overture from Sir John Lonsdale, an Ulster Unionist member, Mr. Redmond declared that 'Heaven knows, there is no man in this House would be more anxious to respond to an appeal from him (Sir John Lonsdale) and his friends.' 'I have hoped against hope,' said Mr. Redmond at the end of his speech, 'and I hope still in the dark and miserable circumstances of the moment, that we may yet come together. Aye, and before very long I hope with all my heart that out of these miseries in Ireland, by taking a large and generous view, by taking something like a statesmanlike view and a far-reaching view of the highest interests of the Empire, we may be able out of this turmoil and tragedy to evolve some means of putting an end to these differences, so that we may have a united Ireland and an Ireland where the people themselves will have both responsibility and the power of government.' The first attempt to turn the rising to good account by evolving an Irish settlement followed immediately upon this speech of Mr. Redmond's.



## CHAPTER X

### A CLOUDED ENDING

ON May 11, 1916, after a speech by Mr. Dillon, in which in vehement language he condemned the *régime* of martial law in Ireland, Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, announced his intention of proceeding immediately to Ireland for the purpose of consulting at first hand with the military authorities, and 'arriving, if possible, at some arrangement for the future which will commend itself to the general consent of Irishmen of all parties.' He remained in Ireland about a week, during which time he visited Belfast and Cork, and conferred with representatives of various Irish parties, not excluding the insurgent prisoners in Dublin. The Prime Minister reported the result of his Irish mission to the House of Commons on May 24th. It had left, he said, 'two main dominant impressions' on his mind. 'The first was the breakdown of the existing machinery of the Irish Government, and the next was the strength and depth, and I might almost say, without exaggeration, the universality of the feeling in Ireland that we have now a unique opportunity for a new departure for a settlement of outstanding problems, and for a general and combined effort to obtain agreement as to the way in which the government of Ireland should in future be carried on.'

There was the most serious prospect that, unless

Irish discontent were immediately appeased, the whole basis of the relations on which the Anglo-Irish quarrel had stood since the days of Parnell would be swept away, and that Irish discontent would be diverted back again from constitutional to revolutionary channels. In all her political history Ireland has seen no more remarkable revulsion of political opinion than that which followed the rising of 1916, and it was apparent that this revulsion of feeling could be stayed only by an immediate settlement.

The insurrection, as we have seen, was not approved by the great mass of the Irish people. Mr. Redmond's outspoken condemnation of it quoted in the last chapter was immediately followed by resolutions of condemnation from public bodies all over Ireland. Nevertheless a very short time after the outbreak a large part, perhaps a majority, of the Irish people gloried in avowing themselves *Sinn Féin*. This reaction of Irish sentiment dated from the wholesale executions of insurgent leaders, accompanied by penal servitude sentences by the score and arrests and deportations by the hundred, which followed the insurrection, and against which Mr. Redmond and his colleagues had protested with their utmost strength. The leaders of the rising must in any case, whether their enterprise was approved or disapproved, have taken a natural place in the popular imagination in the illustrious succession of Ireland's historic 'rebels'; and the 'Irish Revival' of Mr. Redmond's lifetime had contributed powerfully towards recreating the romantic glamour which surrounded 'the memory of the dead.'

The men of 1916, therefore, must in any case have

commanded a certain sentimental sympathy in the mass of the Irish people. Probably but for their execution that sympathy would have remained sentimental and no more. But the exaction from them of the capital penalty for their offence at once replaced that appeal to reason on which Mr. Redmond based his policy with an irresistible appeal to sentiment. It was watched by the Irish people, as a commentator entirely unsympathetic with the insurrection wrote at the time, 'with something of the feeling of helpless rage with which one would watch a stream of blood dripping from under a closed door.' That old suspicion and dislike of the British army as an instrument of oppression, which the war seemed to have destroyed, gained, from these events and from certain unfortunate incidents connected with the actual suppression of the rising, a new lease of bitter life. The insurgent leaders, without any wide public influence in their lives, became in their death popular heroes and martyrs. The old and deep, but hitherto submerged, emotions of Nationalist Ireland—submerged very largely in consequence of Mr. Redmond's leadership—resumed full sway of the national imagination, and jostled out the novel and more superficial emotions induced by the war and Ireland's earlier participation in it. Throughout the country a wave of emotion swept great numbers of Nationalists into the Republican camp.

This revulsion of feeling naturally grouped itself about the political theory known as *Sinn Féin*. As has been said earlier, *Sinn Féin* did not make the rising, but the rising made *Sinn Féin*. Before the insurrection that political philosophy was largely *doctrinaire*; it could not acquire the character of



agitation. But now the outbreak had become loosely associated in the public mind with *Sinn Féin*; the *Sinn Féin* idea was 'in the air'; and the revulsion of popular feeling naturally grouped itself about it. Thus *Sinn Féin*—though in the earlier part of 1916 still scarcely more than a stream of tendency—had become a latent power in the land; a power now gravely threatening Mr. Redmond's hitherto secure ascendancy.

These were the circumstances in which the new effort for a settlement was made. It was obvious that its success would stay the drift from constitutionalism to revolution in Ireland and confirm Mr. Redmond's position. It was equally obvious that its failure would make the Irish situation worse and still further weaken Mr. Redmond's position. The effort failed; and the circumstances in which it failed aggravated the detrimental consequences of its failure.

The basis on which Mr. Lloyd George was commissioned by the Cabinet to attempt to negotiate a settlement was that the Home Rule Act should be brought into immediate operation, but that the six Ulster counties of Down, Antrim, Derry, Armagh, Fermanagh, and Tyrone should be excluded from its scope. This arrangement was to continue for the period of the war and a year afterwards, when it should be brought under review again.

The first body in Ireland to deliberate on the terms of the proposed settlement—which had been conveyed privately to Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson, and were not at this time made public except in their broadest outline—was the Ulster Unionist Council, which met in Belfast under the presidency

of Sir Edward Carson on June 12th. Contrary to the general expectation, the Ulster Unionist Council accepted the proposed settlement. Its assent was secured largely by the aid of a plea of Imperial necessity for an Irish settlement which Mr. Lloyd George had invoked. This was understood to concern the state of Irish-American opinion and the safe output and transit of munitions of war. The Ulster Unionist Council, however, agreed to the terms proposed on the strict understanding that the exclusion of the six counties was to be 'definite.'

The decision of the Ulster Unionists was followed by a Convention of the Nationalists of Ulster, held in Belfast on June 23rd. It was by this time apparent that any proposal involving the 'partition' of Ireland was extremely unpopular in Nationalist Ireland. A number of public bodies had protested against the proposed settlement. The Roman Catholic Hierarchy in Ulster were almost solidly opposed to it. Mr. Redmond, however, exerted all his influence to secure assent to the contemplated arrangement. The considerations which influenced him in approaching the question of 'partition' were discussed at some length in a preceding chapter in connection with the Buckingham Palace Conference. They were now more cogent than ever, and Mr. Redmond took his political fortunes in both hands in pressing for an immediate settlement in terms of 'partition.'

The Ulster Nationalist Convention was held in private; but it was known that Mr. Redmond gave the Convention his assurance that the proposed exclusion of the six Ulster counties was to have the most definite time-limit set upon it, and that he

supported his plea for the acceptance of the settlement upon these conditions with the statement that, if the proposals were not accepted, it would be the last occasion when he would speak upon a public platform as leader of the Irish Party. His threat of resignation carried the day.

The Nationalist Convention had now accepted the proposed settlement on the understanding that it was to be 'temporary and provisional,' while the Ulster Unionist Council had accepted it on the understanding that the exclusion of the six counties was to be 'definite.' It was soon apparent that this divergence in the interpretation of the terms by the two contracting parties was not merely a matter of words. The Government's promised Bill embodying the proposed settlement was not forthcoming. Nationalist opposition to the scheme of 'partition' grew stronger, and suspicion of the Government's good faith in the matter grew with it. Finally a speech of Lord Lansdowne, indicating that the Unionist members of the Cabinet were insisting that the terms of the Amending Bill should make it clear that the excluded Ulster counties could not be brought under Home Rule against their will, and that when the Home Rule Act came into operation the Irish representation should be reduced, provoked an *ultimatum* from Mr. Redmond.

In a letter to the Prime Minister and Mr. Lloyd George he declared that the long delay in the production of the Government's Bill, and the uncertainty and irritation caused by the speech of Lord Lansdowne, had created a very serious situation in Ireland, and that any further delay would make a settlement on the lines laid down in the terms submitted by



Mr. Lloyd George quite impossible. He recalled the fact that he and his colleagues 'obtained the assent of our friends in Ireland in the face of very great difficulties, as the proposed terms were far from popular.' Finally he announced that 'any proposal to depart from the terms agreed upon, especially in respect of the strictly temporary and provisional character of all the sections of the Bill, would compel us to declare that the agreement, on the faith of which we obtained the assent of our supporters in Ireland, had been departed from and was at an end.'

On July 24th—two years to a day after the breakdown of the Buckingham Palace Conference—the Prime Minister announced that the Government did not propose to introduce a Bill in regard to which there did not appear to be a prospect of substantial agreement; and Mr. Redmond, in the subsequent debate, revealed the inner history of the negotiations. He said that Mr. Lloyd George submitted to Sir Edward Carson and himself a series of proposals for a temporary and provisional settlement of the Irish question, as a war emergency measure, to cover the period of the war, and that, after considerable negotiation and many changes, it was agreed by Sir Edward Carson and himself to recommend these proposals to their friends. The Nationalist leaders never concealed from themselves the fact that these proposals entailed very great sacrifices on the part of their supporters. They felt, however, that, as the proposals had been put before them as a matter affecting the highest Imperial interests, it was their duty not only to Ireland, but to the Empire, to obtain the assent of their supporters if possible.

The exact words of the agreement, which was arrived at after considerable consultation, was that the Bill was to remain in force during the continuance of the war, and for a period of twelve months afterwards, this period to be extended by Order in Council if necessary to enable Parliament to make further and permanent provision for the government of Ireland.

‘None of us,’ said Mr. Redmond, ‘desired then, and none of us desires now, that any county in Ulster which objected to Home Rule should be coerced into accepting it. Our hope was that the interval would, by sane and tolerant government in the rest of Ireland, show our fellow-countrymen that their fears were to a great extent groundless, and that, after they had fought and bled side by side in the war, they would be willing, when a permanent settlement was come to, to join in the common good of their country. But we never contemplated that this great question was to be foreclosed and settled now. Another fundamental proposal was that, during the transitory period pending the permanent settlement, the number of Irish members in the Imperial Parliament was to remain as at present. That we regarded as an indispensable safeguard of the temporary character of the arrangement.’

In concluding what he called ‘this somewhat sorry’ story, Mr. Redmond said that he had actually seen the draft of the Bill, which was strictly in accordance with the agreement, and that he was then suddenly informed by the Government that it had been decided at a Cabinet Council to insert two entirely new provisions, one of which provided

for the permanent exclusion of the six Ulster counties, and the other cut out the provision for the retention of the Irish members in their full strength at Westminster during the transitory period. 'I will not bandy words about breaches of faith or violations of solemn agreement,' Mr. Redmond concluded, 'but I want this House and the Government clearly to understand that they have entered on a course which is bound to increase Irish suspicion of the good faith of British statesmen—a course which is bound to inflame feeling in Ireland, and is bound to do serious mischief to those high Imperial interests which we were told necessitated the provisional settlement of this question. Some tragic fatality seems to dog the footsteps of this Government in all their dealings with Ireland. Every step taken by them since the Coalition, and especially since the unfortunate outbreak in Dublin, has been lamentable. They have disregarded any advice that we have tendered to them, and now in the end, having got us to induce our people to make the tremendous sacrifice of agreeing to the temporary exclusion of the six Ulster counties, they have thrown this agreement to the winds, and they have taken the securest means of accentuating every possible danger and difficulty in the Irish situation.'

Sir Edward Carson afterwards recorded a conversation which he had with Mr. Redmond during the negotiations which issued in this impotent conclusion: 'Unless we can settle this interminable business,' said Mr. Redmond, 'you and I will be dead before anything is done to pacify Ireland.' The remark was to prove true in his own case; and there can be little doubt that the failure of this



attempt at settlement and the weight which it added to his cares contributed greatly towards hastening his end.

The circumstances in which the attempt at settlement failed did the gravest damage to Mr. Redmond's position in Ireland. He incurred all the odium of having accepted the unpopular expedient of 'partition' without gaining any of the credit for his courageous attempt to effect a temporary settlement. Moreover, the circumstances in which the attempt failed enabled his critics to point the obvious moral of his policy of seeking to retain the sympathy, and accepting the good faith, of British politicians. Sir Horace Plunkett, afterwards chairman of the Convention, expressed at this time the opinion that the Government's action 'would arouse an opposition which would drive tens of thousands of moderate men into the *Sinn Féin* camp'; and his prediction was fully justified by the event.

The failure of the attempt at settlement was followed by the complete restoration of the system of Castle government which Mr. Asquith, two months before, had described as finally discredited, and most of the offices in the new Irish Executive were filled by Unionists, while Sir John Maxwell was retained as Commander-in-Chief with the powers of martial law at his command. In a speech in Parliament on July 31st, Mr. Redmond, after expressing his feeling that what had happened made a peaceful settlement in the end absolutely certain, declared that, in the name of himself and his colleagues, he must protest against this arrangement. It was his party's plain duty 'to watch and criticise and oppose this new administration how

and when and where they pleased.' He added that 'in the course of this controversy I have not for one moment forgotten the war. Notwithstanding all that has happened, nothing will have the effect of altering my view about the war and Ireland's duty towards the war.'

In October Mr. Redmond made, in his own constituency at Waterford, his first appearance at a political gathering in Ireland since the rising. He said that the first fact they must look in the face was that a bad blow was struck at the hopes of Ireland by the rising in Dublin engineered by men who were enemies of the constitutional movement for Home Rule. The real responsibility rested with the British Government, and it was idle to suppose that the relations between Ireland and the Government could continue as they had been before. Mr. Redmond described the Government's conduct towards Ireland since the war began as marked by the most colossal ineptitude, want of sympathy, and stupidity, so much so that its conduct would have chilled the confidence of any people, much less a people like the Irish, whose history had taught them how dangerous it was to trust English statesmen; and finally the Government had suppressed the rising with gross and panicky violence, and had closed its ears to the plea for clemency. Now Dublin Castle was again a Tory stronghold, and martial law was in existence in every part of the country. 'With such a Government with such a record,' declared Mr. Redmond emphatically, 'the Irish Nationalist representatives can have no relations but those of vigorous opposition.'

He proceeded to deal at length with the question

of conscription. It would be resisted, he said, in every village in Ireland ; its attempted enforcement would be a scandal which would ring round the civilised world. That way, said Mr. Redmond, lay madness, ruin, and disaster. The way to continue to get recruits was far different. 'Appease the inflamed feelings of the Irish people, withdraw martial law, make it plain that the Defence of the Realm Act is to be administered in Ireland in the same spirit as in Great Britain, treat the prisoners of this unfortunate rising as political prisoners, put a stop to the insults and attacks upon Ireland, and recognise generously and chivalrously all she has done.' He added that Ireland's attitude so far as the war was concerned was unchanged, that the Nationalist Party would 'do nothing calculated to postpone by a single instant the victorious end of this conflict,' and that 'I do think it would be a disgrace to Ireland if the Irishmen fighting at the front were left in the lurch, and if Ireland did not go to their assistance.'

The new policy of 'open and vigorous opposition to the Government on all else beside the war,' announced by Mr. Redmond in his Waterford speech, was quickly put into practice in Parliament, where he introduced a resolution 'That the system of government at present maintained in Ireland is inconsistent with the principle for which the Allies are fighting in Europe, and is, or has been, mainly responsible for the recent unhappy events, and for the present state of feeling in that country'; but nothing came of the debate.

The fall of Mr. Asquith's Cabinet and the formation of Mr. Lloyd George's Administration, with its



predominance of Unionist Ministers, created in the December of 1916 great excitement in Ireland. Mr. Lloyd George, in outlining the new Government's policy on December 19th, made a brief reference to Ireland, and said that, while he had not yet been able to devote any time to the Irish problem, he would consider a settlement as a war measure of the first importance and a great victory for the Allied cause. Mr. Redmond expressed his deep disappointment at the Prime Minister's 'vague and indefinite' reference to Ireland. He asked as a Christmas gift to the Irish people that the prisoners of the rising interned without trial should be released, and said that if the Government would take its courage in both hands and make a general gaol delivery—to include the prisoners serving court-martial sentences of penal servitude—it would be doing more to create a better atmosphere and a better feeling than anything else it could do.

Mr. Redmond went on to say that if the Government intended to deal with the final reconciliation of Irish opinion by a settlement of the Irish question, there were two or three things he would like to say. The first was that time was of the essence of the matter; the worst thing that could happen to the Irish question was that it should be allowed to drift further. His next point was that the Government should deal with the question boldly on its own responsibility and initiative—he did not think anything was to be gained by contemplating further negotiations. Finally he declared that the Government must not mix up this question with conditions of recruiting or conscription, which must be left to a change of heart in Ireland. In conclusion he

appealed to the Prime Minister—‘in Heaven’s name, let him not miss the tide.’

Mr. Redmond’s plea of urgency was clearly well founded. The interned prisoners were released just before Christmas, and with their release it quickly became apparent that the sentiment of *Sinn Féin* was being canalised into a definite policy. *Sinn Féin* clubs began to appear up and down the country. Early in 1917—in February—the first opportunity for *Sinn Féin* to show its strength came in the North Roscommon election. This resulted in a victory for the candidate of the new movement by a clear majority over both the Parliamentary Party’s candidate and an independent candidate, and began the series of electoral successes for *Sinn Féin* which were to culminate in Mr. de Valera’s sweeping victory in East Clare a few months later. But just before the Christmas of 1916 also, an unofficial but influential group of Irishmen, mostly with no very definite political attachments, began to work, under the name of the Irish Conference Committee, for a conference of Irish parties in an attempt to settle the Irish question by consent.

Thus emerged two conflicting tendencies which were to dominate Irish politics during the following year—on the one hand the militant *Sinn Féin* policy irreconcilably opposed to a constitutional settlement, on the other what may be called by contrast the Convention policy.

On March 7, 1917, Mr. T. P. O’Connor moved in the House of Commons a resolution to the effect ‘That, with a view to strengthening the hands of the Allies in achieving the recognition of the equal rights of small nations and the principle of nationality

against the opposite German principle of military domination and government without the consent of the governed, it is essential, without further delay, to confer on Ireland the free institutions long promised to her.' Mr. Lloyd George, in his reply, said that the dominant consideration in any present settlement must be its effect on the conduct of the war. There must be no attempt at settlement which would provoke civil disturbance. The Government was prepared to confer self-government on those parts of Ireland which unmistakably demanded it; but they were not prepared to coerce North-East Ulster.

Mr. Redmond solemnly protested against the Prime Minister's statement. He asked whether the Ulster minority were to have power over the majority for ever. Mr. Lloyd George's statement, he said, would play right into the hands of those who were trying to destroy the constitutional movement. He admitted that the condition of Ireland was very serious, that able men with money at their command were bent on smashing the constitutional movement. 'If the constitutional movement disappears,' he declared, 'the Prime Minister will find himself face to face with the revolutionary movement, and he will have to govern Ireland with the naked sword.' Finally Mr. Redmond called upon his colleagues to withdraw as a protest against the Government's attitude, and the Irish Party thereupon followed him out of the House of Commons.

Subsequently the party drafted and issued a manifesto to the United States and the Dominions. It declared that the policy of the Government towards Ireland had made the task of carrying on a



constitutional movement in Ireland so difficult as to be almost impossible. It described Mr. Lloyd George's speech on taking up a position which, if adhered to, would involve a denial of self-government to Ireland for ever. It concluded with a special appeal to the American people in general, and the Irish-Americans in particular, to 'urge upon the British Government the duty of applying to Ireland the great principles so clearly and splendidly enunciated by President Wilson in his historic Address to the Senate of America.' The United States were at this time just entering the war; and the possible effect of the Irish Party's strongly worded appeal to Irish-Americans was doubtless not the least cogent of the considerations which, on March 22nd, impelled the Government to announce, through the mouth of Mr. Bonar Law, that it had decided to make, on its own responsibility, another attempt at an Irish settlement.

The Government's proposal—or rather proposals—was contained in a circular letter of May 16th, addressed by the Prime Minister to Mr. Redmond in common with the other Irish Party leaders. The Government proposed, in the first place, the immediate application of the Home Rule Act to Ireland, excluding the six north-eastern counties of Ulster, this arrangement to be subject to reconsideration of Parliament at the end of five years; in the meantime the establishment of a Council of Ireland, composed of members of Parliament of the excluded area and an equal delegation from the Irish Parliament, with powers to pass legislation affecting the whole of Ireland; and a reconsideration of the financial clauses of the Act.

This thinly disguised scheme of 'partition' was certain of rejection by the Irish Party. For the moment at least the opportunity for a settlement on that basis had passed. The *Sinn Féin* candidate had just won South Longford from the Parliamentary Party's candidate by a very narrow majority, obtained on the strength of an allegation by Archbishop Walsh of Dublin that the country was 'practically sold' into 'partition.' Mr. Redmond replied to the Prime Minister that his proposals had been carefully considered by himself and his colleagues, and that 'the first proposal would, in their opinion, find no support in Ireland, and they desire me to inform you that they are irreconcilably opposed to this scheme, and that any measure based on it will meet with their vigorous opposition.'

The Prime Minister's alternative proposal, in resort as it were to an expedient almost of desperation, was the plan of a Convention, which, in default of the acceptance of its first proposal, the Government declared itself prepared to take the necessary steps to assemble. This alternative Mr. Redmond welcomed and accepted. His acceptance of the Convention plan was wholly consistent with the tendency of his entire political career. It followed naturally from his participation in the Recess Committee which had led to the creation of the Irish Department of Agriculture, and his share in the Land Conference which secured the passage of the Wyndham Land Act. It accorded with his political principle that Irishmen in council were the proper and only competent body for the settlement of Irish questions. It was largely his own leadership of the Irish Party which made possible the assembly of such

a body as the Irish Convention, and that leadership and his attitude within the Convention which made possible such a measure of agreement as that body was to reach.

In announcing, on June 11th, the constitution of the Convention, the Prime Minister referred to the death of Mr. Redmond's brother, Major 'Willie' Redmond, who a few days before had been killed in action at Messines. He recalled Major Redmond's last appeal in Parliament—'While English and Irish soldiers are dying side by side, must the eternal conflict between the two countries go on? In the name of God, we here, who are perhaps about to die, ask you to do that which largely induced us to leave our homes; that which our fathers and mothers taught us to long for; that which is all we desire to make our country happy and contented.' Mr. Lloyd George recalled also the fact that Major Redmond was 'carried tenderly and reverently from the field by Ulster soldiers in an Ulster ambulance,' and pointed to the circumstances of his death as providing an inspiration for the work of the Convention.

But the death of his brother, which was very deeply felt by Mr. Redmond, was to do something else besides provide an inspiration for the work of the Convention. It was to provide the occasion for the event which, even while the Convention was assembling, was at once to disclose the full strength of *Sinn Féin* in Ireland and confirm its hold on the popular imagination—the East Clare election. In view of the Convention the Government had declared a general amnesty. Mr. de Valera, the most prominent of the imprisoned insurgents, who had been



a commandant in Dublin during the rising, was at once adopted as *Sinn Féin* candidate for the seat left vacant by Major Redmond's death. The *Sinn Féin* leader was elected in Major Redmond's room by an enormous majority. It was under the shadow of this significant event that the Convention assembled in Dublin in the Regent House of Trinity College on July 25, 1917.

The Convention represented, in effect, a final attempt to stay the swift transition from a constitutional Ireland to a revolutionary Ireland. Its chances of success depended on the formation of a strong Centre Party, standing between the Orange extremists at one end and the *Sinn Féin* extremists at the other. So far as Unionist Ulster was concerned, if its assent to Home Rule could not be won by liberal concessions, the best issue to be expected, calculated in the long run to secure the same result, was such a measure of agreement among all the other parties and the non-party interests represented in the Convention as would put the 'Old Guard' of Ulster Unionism in a position of complete moral isolation.

It was to such an issue to the Convention that Mr. Redmond devoted the closing months of his life. He was elected a member of the Grand Committee of twenty members appointed on September 27th, 'to prepare a scheme for submission to the Convention which would meet the views and difficulties expressed by the various speakers' during the preliminary debate, and shared in the drafting of what was called the 'Midleton compromise' put before the full Convention on its reassembly on December 18th, to receive the Grand Committee's report. This

scheme, for which Lord Midleton, the leader of the Southern Unionist delegation, was chiefly responsible, was thus described in the final Report of the Convention drafted by its chairman, Sir Horace Plunkett. 'It accepted self-government for Ireland. In return for special minority representation in the Irish Parliament, already conceded by the Nationalists, it offered to that Parliament complete power over internal legislation and administration; and, in matters of finance, over direct taxation and Excise. But, although they agreed that the Customs revenue should be paid into the Irish Exchequer, the Southern Unionists insisted upon the permanent reservation to the Imperial Parliament of the power to fix the rate of Customs duties. By far the greater part of our time and attention was occupied by this one question, whether the imposition of Customs duties should or should not be under the control of the Irish Parliament.'

Mr. Redmond, who had taken the leading part in offering such concessions as special minority representation to the Unionists, strove his hardest to effect a compromise on this vital question of Customs. He felt that nothing effective could result from the work of the Convention unless some understanding was reached upon Customs which would render an agreement on a complete scheme obtainable. Accordingly he was willing to agree, in order that a Parliament should be at once established, to postpone a legislative decision upon the ultimate control of Customs and Excise. This compromise was accepted by all the Southern Unionists, five of the seven Labour delegates, and most of the non-party representatives; and laid, in the chairman's words,

'a foundation of Irish agreement unprecedented in history.' It was opposed, however, by a strong Nationalist minority, headed by Mr. Devlin, and including three of the four Roman Catholic Bishops in the Convention. These held that, without separate Customs and Excise, Ireland would fail to attain a national *status* like that enjoyed by the Dominions, and that, in the present state of Irish opinion, without Customs no scheme the Convention recommended would receive sufficient popular support to be effective.

The failure to induce this strong Nationalist minority to accept the Midleton compromise, and thereby to secure the complete agreement of all sections except the Ulster Unionists, was a bitter disappointment to Mr. Redmond. He returned to London in the early spring of 1918 a broken man, and took no part in the final meetings of the Convention. Perhaps mercifully, he did not live to see the Convention's Report finally presented with such an incomplete measure of agreement as had been reached, and even that outcome of its labours promptly wrecked by the Government's sudden decision to apply conscription to Ireland—a policy which for the time being almost wholly submerged the constitutional movement in whose service he had spent his life.

John Redmond died in London on March 6, 1918, and was buried in Wexford in the family burial ground at the end of the week. Upon the news of his death the Convention, then in session, adjourned out of respect for his memory until after the funeral, passing first a resolution which declared that he 'was valued by all as a great Irishman, a brilliant



Parliamentarian, an honourable opponent, a kindly friend, a genial and warm-hearted comrade.’<sup>1</sup> It was an apt epitome of the character of the Irish leader, whose own last words, quoted by the Prime Minister in his tribute to Mr. Redmond’s memory in Parliament, were, indeed, a summary of his whole political life—‘a plea for concord between the two races that Providence has designed should work as neighbours together.’

In retrospect one sees the dominant purpose of his political life emerging from his career as a recurrent *motif* of gathering force. The Recess Committee, the Land Conference, the Convention, that last chance of recovering the lost and misused opportunity which the war created—in these episodes most unmistakably the purpose grows and broadens.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Horace Plunkett, in a letter to the members of the Convention after the deadlock and Mr. Redmond’s death, recalled the latter’s *dictum* in his speech at the meeting of the Convention in Belfast in September: ‘Far better we had never met than to meet and fail.’ ‘The death of the most experienced statesman amongst us,’ wrote the Chairman, ‘may, I fear, have increased our difficulties more than some of us realise at the moment. It was a crushing blow to my personal hopes and plans, because I relied upon him to do for us what none other could do so well. . . . I have always believed that we should win out eventually; but then I had pictured our lost friend coming back to us with restored health and bringing to our aid the greatest Parliamentary qualities of any Irishman in our generation. He regarded his work in setting up the Convention and guiding it to its appointed end as the last and crowning act of a long and devoted service to his country. Moreover, his attitude towards the Convention was ideal. From the outset he stood for independent rather than party action—a profoundly wise and statesmanlike conception of the spirit in which alone we can rise to the dignity and importance of the task entrusted to us. It pained us deeply when this independence seemed to have made the Convention the unwilling cause of a disappointment at the end of his career second only to the tragedy which darkened the earlier years of his public life.’

To widen the happy accord on the most intractable of all Irish disorders—the agrarian—into a *concordat* of Catholic and Protestant in a spirit of generous toleration, and to combine, by the same triumphant process of consent that had extinguished landlordism, all Irish ranks and creeds for the establishment of Home Rule: such was his endeavour.

Such was the endeavour for which the war offered the crowning opportunity. If that opportunity was wasted, the main fault was not John Redmond's. How far did he fail through fallibility of judgment of his own; how far through the active opposition of the forces which desired strife where he desired peace or the deadlier *vis inertiae* of the human material which he sought to mould; how far through the working of that incalculable mischance which steadily mocks the best efforts of Irish leaders? One cannot as yet gain a fair historical perspective for distributing the responsibility among these various factors; all of them in some measure contributed to the ending of his life-work in disappointment and defeat. But against the immediate background of untoward circumstance stands out the fine figure of a great Irish gentleman who played for a high stake gallantly, and lost without dishonour.

His place in relation to former Irish leaders is not yet clear. We recall the fact that his great Parliamentary predecessors of the nineteenth century, Daniel O'Connell, Isaac Butt, Charles Stewart Parnell, lost before they died, as John Redmond did, the 'confidence' of a majority of their people. We know, however, that, even among the Irish themselves, the reputations of O'Connell, Butt, and Parnell have not been lessened by that fact. The

crown of romance adorns their memories. And, however the Irish at home may feel at the moment, there is no doubt that the Irish in England, in America, in the British Dominions stand by the principles for which John Redmond lived and died. There is still a prospect that his policy may be triumphantly vindicated in all its aspects. It may still be shown that, judged merely by the worldly test of practical results, he was successful beyond all those who have sought to serve Ireland. It is sure at all events that John Redmond's life-work is no more wasted than the life-work of Parnell and O'Connell; for nothing that is sincere and loyal is lost.



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